Johnny Blossom

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Johnny Blossom

TELLEF'S GRANDMOTHER

JOHNNY BLOSSOM

From the Norwegian of
DIKKEN ZWILGMEYER

TRANSLATED BY
EMILIE POULSSON

Illustrations by
F. LILEY YOUNG

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Preface

HAVING made acquaintance with Johnny Blossom in his native land of Norway through the stories about him by Miss Dikken Zwilgmeyer, the desire to introduce the amusing, sound-natured boy to American children has resulted in this translation.

Some liberty has been taken with the original text, chiefly to eliminate circumstances or incidents which would not be clear to child readers in a different environment; but I have taken pains to keep the translation faithful to the original in spirit and expression, appreciating that in these lies much of the wholesome power of the book.

Johnny Blossom is not local but universal. Interest in him is not even limited to boys. When the book first appeared, a Norwegian reviewer wrote:

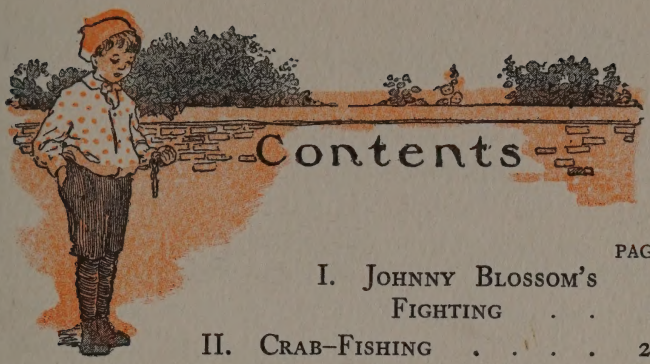
"Our most popular author of books for little girls has this year forsaken them, and apparently gone over to the boys, since her book is about a

boy; . . . but I have yet to see the little girl who would not be glad to read of such a boy as Johnny Blossom. . . . Although a genuine boy, he is a right-minded little fellow with earnest childlike spirit; and he can never be thoroughly content until he has had his mother's full forgiveness when he has been naughty, or, if he has wronged any one, until he has made restitution."

With confidence that such a child will be a good story-book friend for our children, and a favorite with them as he is among his little compatriots, I send Johnny Blossom forth to meet his welcome.

EMILIE POULSSON

HOPKINTON, MASS., 1912



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JOHNNY BLOSSOM

JOHNNY BLOSSOM

CHAPTER I His Fighting

OH! Everything was so horrid! That stupid Tellef Olsen! Always boasting and bragging about his muscle as if he were the only one in the town who had muscle. Well, anyway, he wouldn't be coming around here any more to brag about it.

Johnny Blossom thrust his arm out fiercely and drew it slowly in again with his teeth set and his face getting very red. Ha! That was awfully good muscle there, just what muscle ought to be — rounding up in your arm and as hard as iron to feel of. How tired he had been of the other boys' bragging about Tellef, too. It seemed as if they never talked of anything else. That was why he had been out of patience yesterday. Well, he had shown them, once for all, who was the strongest.

My, oh, my! How he had pounded Tellef! But he would really like to know whether any

one wouldn't be a little angry if, when he was sitting on a fence not thinking of a thing, some one should come and poke him in the back with a long stick?

For that was just the way the trouble began. He had been walking on his tallest stilts the whole afternoon—the stilts that were exactly, to the dot, one yard fifteen inches and a half tall—and then had sat himself on the fence along the back alley. He was facing the yard, with his back toward the alley, and that disgusting Olsen boy came past and gave him a dig in the back with that sharp stick. Just think of it! Wouldn't anybody say it was unbearable?

Like a flash, John had slid down from the fence and rushed after Tellef; and then came the fight.

Gracious! how that boy had yelled! Well, a good pommeling was just what he deserved. It was rather a pity, though, that there had come a great split in his jacket and that his fishpole had got broken to bits in the fight. Even if it hadn't ever been a good pole, it was wonderful how much he caught with it. He had to catch fish for his mother every single day. People said that at Tellef's house they ate

fish for breakfast, dinner, and supper, and that they had scarcely anything else to eat. Ugh! That must be tiresome! There was nothing so horrid when one came home from school very hungry, and shouted at the kitchen door "What are we going to have for dinner?" as to have Olea the cook say "Codfish." And think! That was about all they had to eat down in Tellef's shanty.

Well, anyway, Tellef had given him an ugly scratch on the cheek. It hurt awfully, for it was a long, deep scratch. Ugh! But the fight had been a great one, and Tellef and everybody knew now who was the strongest, and all that bragging about Tellef's muscle was done with.

It must be grand to be so strong that one could, well, beat everybody—that is, of course, all the boys,—if one had a mind to do it. Not that he, Johnny Blossom, really wanted to fight everybody; only to have strength enough to do it, if it were necessary. And to be able to hold the heaviest things with your arm stretched out straight!

Every day at home he had a great gymnastic performance, holding a dining-room chair at arm's length. He could do it splendidly now, so lately he had thought he would practise

holding his sisters up that way. If he began with the littlest sister he might by degrees work up to the biggest. Perhaps even so he might not be able to manage Asta — she was so fat. But they were all tiresome. They screamed if he merely touched them. Just think what happened in the dining room only yesterday?

Without meaning the least harm, and as nicely as possible, he had taken Dagny up to see whether he could hold her two minutes with his arm out straight and stiff. And that big child, who was a whole year old, had roared so that they had come rushing in from every corner of the house, even Father, from his midday nap, with rumpled hair and angry looks. Oh, dear! It was horrid. That stupid child! People might have understood that he was just trying his strength.

Everything had been disagreeable all the afternoon, until by and by he happened to think of trying to dance a mazurka on his highest stilts. Doing that he had fortunately forgotten his troubles.

Then came Tellef's hitting him in the back and their fighting, with Tellef, for all his muscle, getting the worst of it. Of course Mrs. Dahl, who had seen them fighting, would come and tell

Mother. Awfully pleasant that would be! Oh, well, he didn't mind.

Johnny Blossom put his hands in his pockets and whistled, "*Yes, we love our grand old Norway,*" loudly and shrilly.

Still, it was perfectly horrid that Tellef's fish-pole had got smashed. That was awfully bad luck. And his jacket torn, too. But how could he expect anything else when he was so horrid with his boasting and everything?

"*Yes, we love our grand old Norway,*" Johnny Blossom whistled again with great vigor.

Perhaps he ought to be looking after his own fishing tackle. Every one was talking about going fishing nowadays and he'd better see whether his tackle was hanging where it should be, on the wall of the wash-house. William Holm had done nothing at school today but brag of that new fishing tackle of his.

Not a sign of Johnny's was to be seen. Who could have been so mean as to take it away? Of course he had put it in its place. (A great stirring up of things and searching everywhere.) Dear! How meddlesome people were! Here they had gone and hidden away his fishing rod. Really, wouldn't any one be angry?

Oh! there it hung by the boiler closet. But

what a forlorn, miserable thing! He had not remembered that it was so worn out. Why, it scarcely held together! It was almost a disgrace to have such shabby fishing tackle, especially now when William Holm had that brand-new pole and Philip Krag was going to get one tomorrow. No, this old thing would not do. He positively needed a new outfit, and that meant that he simply must have some money.

"*Yes, we love*" — Why, of course! He would go over to Kingthorpe. It was a long time since he had been there, certainly as much as two weeks. What a comfort it was to have such an uncle as Uncle Isaac of Kingthorpe! For one thing, it sometimes happened that he made you a present of a quarter, and a person was so likely to need a quarter — need it badly, dreadfully, as he, Johnny Blossom himself, did today.

Without further delay off he started on the road to Kingthorpe, but his thoughts were still busy.

Uncle Isaac had not given him anything the last time he was there, nor the time before either, so very likely — Pshaw! Even if you got nothing at all from Uncle Isaac, it was always more than pleasant to go to Kingthorpe. He wasn't going there to beg — far from it; he wasn't quite so mean as that.

Here his steps lingered a little, but he walked on nevertheless.

Some things about these visits were rather tiresome. Not exactly with Uncle Isaac, though you had to be a bit careful with him, too; but there was that fussy housekeeper of his, Miss Melling. One was never sure which door she would poke her nose out of and call: "Walk quietly, Johnny. Shut the door softly. Have you wiped your feet thoroughly, Johnny boy?"

The idea of her calling him Johnny boy! That was perfectly outrageous! What right had she to call him by that name? He had outgrown it long ago, and no one used it now except just herself. Here he would be ten years old in a fortnight, no, in twelve days — or, to be exact, twelve days and a half, and so surely he was too old for that baby name.

Perhaps Miss Melling could fly through the air, but he couldn't; and yet she seemed to think that he could come all the way over here without getting his shoes muddy! He would surely ask her today whether she could fly. She did not look so very light!

All the floors at Kingthorpe were as shining as a mirror. Mother said they were waxed. It was a good thing the floors at home were not

waxed, for it would be an awful job to take care of them. When he and Asta played tag around the dining-room table for instance — my, oh my! but there would be a good many scratches on the floor! Queer, that rich people must have every thing so fine! For his part, he thought such elegance was only a bother.

How disgusting about Tellef's old fishing tackle! And that his jacket should get that great split in it, too! The pity about the jacket was that Tellef hadn't any other. But all the same, it was mean of Tellef to hit him in the back.

"*Yes, we love our grand old Norway!*" This time he whistled almost the whole tune in his loud, shrill whistle; then he took to his heels and was soon at the big gate that led into the Kingthorpe grounds.

It was queer, but the minute you were inside that gate you felt quiet, almost solemn, and like behaving your very best. Everything was orderly and stately and peaceful. The trees were very old and very tall, with wonderfully broad, full crowns. The lawns were very spacious, with not a single twig on the grass anywhere, and the paths were always smooth, as if freshly raked.

Every one said that Uncle Isaac was awfully rich. Well, then, why did he look so sad and why was he always thinking and thinking so hard? What in the world could he be puzzling about when he was so rich? Why, he had everything, even to a saddle horse and a pleasure yacht; and the horse was a thoroughbred, according to Carlstrom the coachman.

It was different with Father. When he looked troubled, Mother said he was worried about money matters, and that we had to be very careful with our money. Pshaw! Why must some people be so careful about money, and some ride on fine saddle horses, and some have nothing but fish to eat, morning, noon, and night?

If he only hadn't smashed Tellef's fishing rod yesterday!

"*Yes, we love our grand old Norway!*" Suddenly he stopped short. Think of his whistling in Kingthorpe Park! It was to be hoped that no one had heard. Of course you should be nice and quiet here. It was to be hoped, too, that that ill-tempered watchdog would not come growling along. Not that Johnny Blossom was afraid of him. Far from it! But that dog was so cross, you couldn't like him.

Johnny stood still, unconsciously kicking a big hole in the path as he meditated. Perhaps it would be just as well to go straight back home again without seeing Uncle Isaac; but no — he really needed a quarter terribly today; and on he ran through the grounds and burst in at the big entrance door of Kingthorpe.

The front hall was very grand. It was two stories high and the floor was of checkered black and white marble. Here you need not be so careful about footmarks as on the other floors, which were all highly polished.

Pshaw! There stood Miss Melling, Uncle Isaac's housekeeper. "Why! Is it you, John? Is there anything particular wanted?"

There! Any one could see by that how horrid she was — asking if he wanted anything in particular!

"Oh, I just came to see Uncle Isaac, it is so long since I was here."

"Long? It seems to me you were here only last week."

"No, I wasn't."

"Well, I don't know whether your uncle is well enough to see you today. I will find out."

How tiresome Miss Melling was! Well, if she offered him cookies and jelly today, as

she sometimes did, she would find out that he wouldn't take anything from her. Never in the world.

Here she was again.

"Yes, you may go in; but you must wipe your feet well and shut the door softly and not stay so long as to tire him."

Wouldn't any one suppose that Uncle Isaac was her uncle and not his, Johnny Blossom's, the way she behaved?

Johnny Blossom, cap in hand, tiptoed with unusual care over the highly polished floor. First a gentle knock on Uncle's door, then a louder one.

"Come right in, my boy."

Johnny Blossom bowed low as he entered.

Gray-haired, delicate, with sorrowful eyes and long, white hands, Uncle Isaac sat in his big, carved, oaken chair.

"Good day, John! Now this is very kind of you to come to me, away out here."

"Yes. I thought it was an awfully long time since you had seen me."

"True, so it is. I suppose you are very busy nowadays?"

"Awfully busy. Tonight we are going out fishing."

"I meant particularly at school."

"Oh! Of course I go to school."

"You are a good scholar?"

"Oh, well, I am not the worst. I'm not one of the best either, but I'm not the worst, really."

"But you should be among the best, Johnny Blossom."

There was a short silence.

"It is awfully hard to be among the best, Uncle Isaac," with an apologetic smile.

"Not if a person is industrious, John."

Johnny Blossom suddenly found something the matter with his shoestring. His face was very red when he straightened up again, saying, "How provoking shoestrings are!"

"How are your sisters?"

"Oh, very well."

"My god-daughter, Dagny — she is getting big now?"

"My, oh, my! She is so heavy! You would hardly believe how heavy she is; but I almost know that I could lift her and hold her at arm's length with my arm out like this, perfectly straight!"

"My dear John! You do not try lifting the child at arm's length, as you say?"

"Yes, I tried once. I could do it well enough, too; but you should just see how cross that child is. She roars at nothing."

"But there might be a bad accident if you dropped her."

Johnny smiled condescendingly. "You don't know how strong I am, Uncle Isaac. Look at my muscle here."

Quick as a flash, Johnny's jacket was off and he was displaying his little shirt sleeve. "Look here! Look! Isn't that good muscle?"

Suddenly he glanced around the room. "Isn't there something here I can lift?"

"My dear Johnny! No, no!"

"Yes, that fire-screen will be just the thing."

"No, no, thank you, John. I am willing to believe that you are very strong."

"There! This lamp will do."

A little firm brown hand had already seized upon the big lamp.

Uncle Isaac roused up. "No, no, my boy! Let go the lamp! Let go instantly!"

"Well, if you don't want me to show you. But really, if my little finger were only big enough, I could lift the lamp just with that."

Johnny shook the brown little finger almost in Uncle Isaac's face.

"Why, what have you done to your face, John? You have a big scratch there."

"Oh, that? Well, that's — that's nothing."

"But how did you get it?"

"Why — it — it came so."

"Came so? What do you mean?"

"Oh, we were fighting."

"Why were you fighting?"

"It was just that stupid Tellef Olsen. He bragged so much about being the strongest of all the boys" —

"And then?"

"The whole school said he was the strongest, and that was disgusting, for it wasn't true. I'm a great deal stronger than Tellef. I am really awfully strong, I am."

"And so you fought?"

"Yes. I was up on the fence yesterday, and Tellef Olsen went past in the alley and hit me in the back with a long switch" —

"And then?"

"Why, yes. Then we fought each other, you know."

A silence followed this remark. Since Uncle Isaac said nothing, Johnny continued:

"I beat, too! My, what a thrashing I gave

him! Now they'll know I am the strongest. I'd rather be strong than anything else."

Again it was very still.

"You say that, do you, John? You think that to be strong is the greatest thing? Possibly it was, in past ages; but in the future, the man with the most love in his heart, the best man, will be the greatest. Remember that, little John Blossom."

The boy looked at his uncle in astonishment. The man with the most love in his heart the best man? *He* the greatest of all?

"Yes," continued Uncle Isaac. "He who heals instead of wounds, he who does good and helps the needy, he is the greatest, John Blossom."

Heals and not wounds; does good; helps the needy. Johnny sat staring at his Uncle Isaac. Deep within his heart there lay a weight, a sadness. It was the thought of Tellef Olsen's fishing rod that he had broken to smithereens — Tellef's, who had to go fishing every day or his mother and the children would have nothing to eat; and of the jacket all split, too, — the only one Tellef had.

Uncle Isaac was gazing far away, up toward the sky. "That is being great; the greatest any one in the world can be."

All at once it had become very impressive in there with Uncle Isaac, who seemed to have forgotten him and continued gazing up into the sky. Johnny Blossom turned and fidgeted in his seat. "I've got to go," he said suddenly.

"Well, well. Wait a minute." Uncle Isaac took out his pocket-book and gave John two bright half-dollars. "There is always something you would like to buy for yourself, little John, so take this; but don't fight any more, and remember what it is that makes a man great."

"Thank you, Uncle Isaac. Good-by." With this Johnny Blossom bowed and vanished.

Out in the front hall stood Miss Melling, holding in her hand a plate on which was a big piece of cake with thick frosting on it.

"Johnny boy, see here! Here is something for you."

He had bitten into the cake before he remembered that he never in the world was going to take any more goodies from Miss Melling. "Thank you." He bowed low, with his mouth crammed full of cake. "Thank you." Of course he couldn't possibly say that he wouldn't have the cake when she put it right under his nose that way. He had thought of her asking him to go into her room to be treated to cookies and

jelly. That was what he had meant he would not do.

Soon he was in the grounds again, but he did not hurry, nor did he give one thought to the cross mastiff. Every now and then he opened his hand to look at the two silver pieces. To think that he really had two half-dollars! He could get himself extra good fishing tackle for that much money — far better than William Holm's even. Yes, as Uncle Isaac had said, there was always something you wanted to buy for yourself. What was that other thing Uncle Isaac had said? The man with the most love in his heart was the greatest? He who was kind was greater than he who was strong?

How hard he had hit Tellef in the face! How the blood had spurted out from his nose! It was too bad. Tellef had not been out to play last night or today either. How that jacket of his looked, torn that way! Really, it was a perfect shame.

Again and again Johnny Blossom opened his hand and looked at the silver pieces. Suddenly, speaking aloud in his determination, he said: "I am going to give these to Tellef. It was an awful shame for me to fight him like that, even if he did hit me in the back."

Johnny dashed off at a run. What if they hadn't had even fish to eat at Tellef's house today on account of the broken pole?

The road was very steep and he almost slid down, landing right near the shanty where Tellef lived. Oh, dear! What was to be done next? It would be very embarrassing to say to Tellef that he felt ashamed of himself. How could he do it?

Aha! there was Christina, Tellef's little sister.

"Here, Christina. Will you give these to Tellef?"

Johnny Blossom handed her the two half-dollars, speaking fast and feeling in a great hurry to get away. Christina looked at him in amazement.

"What for?" she asked.

"Oh, because I fought him; because his fishpole got smashed."

He was off, leaping up the steep road. Christina looked at the money and then at the disappearing boy and said, "How queer he was!"

For several days Johnny Blossom avoided meeting Tellef, but he saw that Tellef had bought a handsome strong fishing rod, and that he had had fish to take home every single day.

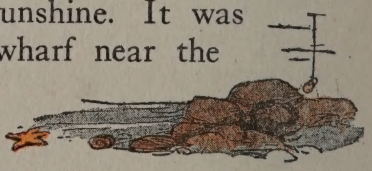
"That's fine new tackle you have," said William Holm to Tellef one afternoon.

"Yes." Tellef cast a smiling glance at Johnny Blossom.

With that it was as if the old score between them was wiped out once for all. That same afternoon they went fishing together and talked much about the new fishing rod's wonderful catching powers; but not a word did Johnny Blossom say as to why he had given the money to Tellef, nor did Tellef ever mention it. And there was no more talk between them as to who was the stronger.

NOW there was going to be fun in plenty! Hadn't they come out to Oxen Bay for the whole summer, Mother and the three sisters and himself? And wasn't Father coming every Saturday to spend Sunday? They were living in Pilot Taraldsen's small yellow house, and he and his boy Eric had moved out into a sort of woodshed for the summer. Johnny Blossom had turned somersaults all over the field near the house for pure joy, on his first arrival at Oxen Bay.

One hot noontide he and Eric lay on the wharf in the baking sunshine. It was not Pilot Taraldsen's wharf near the house, but the old wharf beyond the woods.



Really it was a delightful old wharf. Near the shore it was built on rocks and stones, but farther out there were thick piles on which the great heavy boards were laid. There was no railing, and at the extreme end a single board to which boats could be fastened projected far out over the water. The boards shone white and hot in the sun. The piles down in the water were covered with tiny shells, seaweed, and greenish slime.

What a clear light green the water was under the wharf! You could see every single snail shell, every starfish, and every tiniest stone on the smooth, light-colored bottom. Whole schools of small fish darted, quick as lightning, between the slimy old piles. Once in a while a lazy eel glided under the wharf, wound slowly in and out, lay still a moment as if to sun itself, then slowly, curve after curve, took itself out again.

The path leading down from the woods was so rough and steep that people never liked to walk on it; and no boats were kept at this wharf except the sail-boat belonging to a merchant from the city. The merchant's boat was an unusually beautiful one. It was painted a dazzling white and had "Sea Mew" in golden letters on one side of it.

Johnny Blossom and Eric, the pilot's son, lay on the wharf with their heads stretched out over the edge, gazing down into the water. "Shall we fish for crabs?" asked Eric. Of course Johnny thought this was just the thing to do. Eric took a long string from his pocket and tied a stone at the end.

"See that thundering big one away over there? I'm going to get her," said Eric, pointing to a venerable looking crab that had been lying for a long time squeezed in between two rocks. The boys dangled the string with the stone on it temptingly near the big crab. Crabs usually get excited over a stone swinging above them that way. They reach up for it, grip it tightly, and — a jerk and up they come! But this crab had seen too many such stones in its long life, and lay stock still without moving a claw.

"Come, old lady," encouraged Eric.

"She's dead," said Johnny.

"Not a bit of it, Bub, she's only sly."

"Perhaps I can poke her out with a stick," suggested Johnny. But not a stick could they find, though they looked all around. In the sail-boat, however, there was the finest kind of a boat-hook.

"I'll get that boat-hook," said Johnny, jumping on board the "Sea Mew."

"Well, I'll poke her out," said Eric.

"No, I will," said Johnny.

They disputed over this a long time.

"You must remember I got the boat-hook," urged Johnny.

Finally they agreed to take turns poking at the crab, but it would not budge. It lay as if it were nailed fast to the rocks.

"Get out of that, you old grandmother!"

Johnny Blossom grew more and more excited. He stood on the tip end of the plank that extended out over the water.

"There! Now!" Eric cheered him on. "Reach farther out, Bub! She's stirring a little. Farther out, I say."

Splash! There lay Johnny Blossom and the boat-hook in the water. Oh, how angry he was! "Ugh — Ugh!" he sputtered.

Dropping the boat-hook, he swam the couple of strokes that would bring him to the wharf, and climbed up.

"Ugh, how wet I am!" said Johnny, and then,

"Catch that boat-hook there!" he shouted, as it floated almost to the edge of the wharf.

No — Eric could not catch the boat-hook —

and there was no boat for them to go after it in; so Johnny Blossom had to jump into the water again, catch the boat-hook, and swim to shore with it. Ugh! how sopping wet he was!

"Take your clothes off and dry them then," said Eric.

Johnny wriggled himself out of his wet blouse and shirt and everything, wrung them out, and spread them to dry upon the sun-warmed boards. In the meantime Eric had possessed himself of the boat-hook and was poking at the crab.

"Ha! I'll get her out!"

No — Johnny Blossom claimed that it was still his turn. They had a tussle over it and Johnny won; and there he stood, stark naked in the sunshine on the projecting plank, poking and thrusting with the boat-hook.

Suddenly they heard voices. Who in the world was coming? The boys looked toward the forest.

Yes, there was a lady and a gentleman on the path — that rough path full of tree roots and stones; and another lady and gentleman — and following them two ladies — more ladies — in light dresses and with baskets.

My, oh, my! Here he stood without any clothes on and with the boat-hook from the

"Sea Mew" in his hand! And here came the merchant who owned the sail-boat.

Eric took to his heels and sped like an arrow across the beach and up to the forest. Johnny Blossom sprang after him, throwing the boat-hook on the wharf as he went. He never thought of his clothes until he was in the woods.

My! how he ran! He was in such a fright that he did not once glance back. My, oh, my! Here he was running along in his bare skin; while his clothes, wet as wet could be, were lying down there among all those elegant ladies!

And home was a good way off; first through the forest, then along the stone wall, and all across the Karine place, where everybody could see him. How disgusting! Where Eric was, or even which way he had gone in the woods, Johnny had no idea.

From the wharf below came the sound of laughter. How those ladies were laughing and shouting! He could not see them because of the trees, but the talk and laughter was incessant.

He threw himself down behind a wild rose-bush. They would probably sail away soon and then he could go down after his clothes. Pretty lucky to have got away from that cross mer-

chant! Eric had always said he was an awfully cross man.

A long time Johnny lay there and all the while the sound of talk and laughter floated up to him, so he knew that the picnic party must still be on the wharf. The wind began to blow harder; it blew colder, too, horridly cold in fact, and he felt almost frozen. Shivering and with his teeth chattering, he crept back a little way toward the wharf and gazed down from behind a tree trunk.

Just think! There they sat, in the sunshine on the wharf, eating from their baskets and having such a good time; and here was he, alone, naked, and so frightfully cold. Boo-hoo-hoo! He wanted to go home to Mother. He might crawl home through the gutters — but what would Mother say if he went home without any clothes? Boo-hoo-hoo!

"What's the matter? What ye cryin' fer?" It was Nils the fisherman who spoke and whose coming over the soft grass Johnny had not noticed.

"Land's sakes! Layin' here naked, boy?"

Then Johnny Blossom cried in earnest.

"Yes"—sob, sob—"my clothes are down on the wharf and the ladies are sitting there eating and laughing and — boo-hoo-hoo!"

"Hev ye ben doin' suthin' bad? Dassn't ye go git yer things?"

"I tumbled into the water"—sob—"and we took the boat-hook from 'Sea Mew'—and then the people came and I ran"—

"Oh, well! See here. I'll lend ye my blouse. Put it on and run down fer yer clo'es."

How kind Nils was! The blouse came almost to Johnny's knees, but now that he had something on there was no reason for not going to the wharf. Still, it was horrid to go among all those strangers, rigged out in this fashion.

He took his way slowly down, hiding behind trees, looking out and then sneaking forward again, until he reached the open beach. The picnic party was still feasting merrily, making speeches and drinking one another's health. Johnny stole along, dodging from rock to rock. Suddenly one of the ladies called out: "Mercy! there he is!" Then they all clapped their hands and shouted to him and clapped their hands again.

"Come here, boy," called a very stout gentleman, the cross merchant who owned the "Sea Mew."

Oh, dear! How embarrassing it was—perfectly horrid! And how they roared again as he came on to the wharf!

"What kind of a specimen are you?" asked the stout gentleman.

"I am not a specimen. I am Johnny Blossom."

"No — are you really?"

Johnny did not see anything to laugh at, yet they laughed harder than ever.

"May I ask whether it was you that took the boat-hook out of my sail-boat?"

The stout gentleman had a tight grip on Johnny's little red ear.

"Please excuse me about the boat-hook," and a small brown hand was stretched out and laid in the merchant's hand.

"Come now. He shall have a cake," said one of the ladies. "Here, take more; take these, and these."

"Why don't you eat them?" asked another lady.

"Oh, I'm going to give them to Nils the fisherman."

"Why is that?"

"Because he lent me his blouse." Johnny Blossom was exceedingly serious throughout the whole conversation.

"Good-by." He bowed, his little naked heels put together in most formal manner.

"Good-by, little Johnny Blossom, and thanks for the pleasure you have given us."

Just what the pleasure was Johnny Blossom could not exactly understand.

"You mustn't put those wet clothes on," said one lady.

"Oh, they're dry," said Johnny, feeling of the clothes. "They're as dry as tinder."

At this they all laughed again. There was a very wet place on the wharf where the clothes had lain.

Fortunately Mother was out when he first got home, and Lisa the maid was very kind in helping him get dry clothes. It was queer, but perhaps his others had not been as dry as tinder, after all.

Johnny deliberated all the afternoon as to whether he should tell his mother what had happened or not. She was so everlastingly anxious about such things. But when she came to his room to say good night, he burst out with it.

"Mother, I fell in the water today."

"Oh, my boy!"

"Yes, I just tumbled right in." He got up in bed, eager to show how he fell. "But it was

horrid afterward, because some fine ladies and gentlemen came, who ate and drank there on the wharf a long time; and then Nils the fisherman lent me his blouse, and they gave me some cream cakes" —

"Why in the world should Nils lend you his blouse?"

"Oh, because I was all naked and had been lying behind a bush ever so long" —

"But, John dear!"

"Nils was so happy over the cakes. He took them home to that sick boy of his."

"Didn't you eat any of them yourself?"

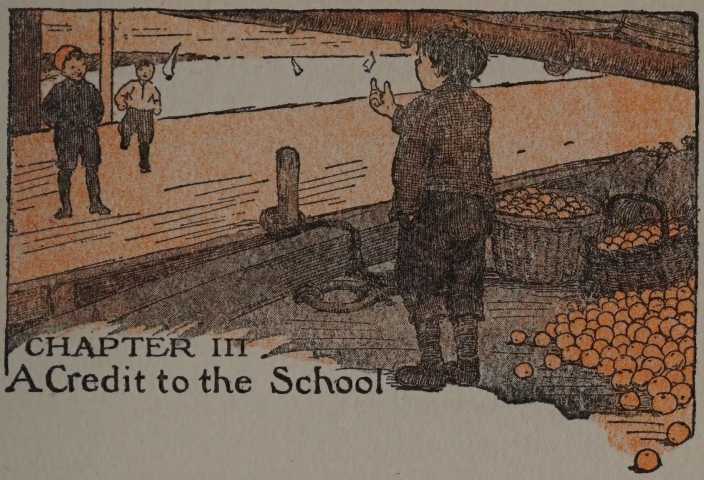
"No — I gave them all to Nils; but that stout man pinched my ear pretty hard, I can tell you."

"Had you done something wrong, John?"

"Well — that was because of the boat-hook, you see; but I asked him to excuse me and we shook hands."

"Rather an involved story," thought Mother. But she said: "Well, now you must say your prayers and go to sleep."

So Johnny Blossom repeated the little prayers he had said every night since he was two years old, and was soon sleeping peacefully.



CHAPTER III
A Credit to the School

JOHNNY BLOSSOM was walking home from school. He carried his head high; his turned-up, freckled nose was held proudly in the air; his cap hung on the back of his head. Both hands were in his pockets, and his loud whistling waked the echoes as he strode through Jensen Alley. Perfectly splendid monthly report! Of course he knew it, word for word, and he said it over to himself again, as he had many times.

"*John has lately been more industrious. With his excellent ability he is now a credit to the school.*"

This was signed with nothing less than the Principal's name. Not just a teacher's — no,

thank you! A credit to the school. The whistling grew louder and more piercing. A credit to the school. He was going straight to Father with this report, and would lay it right under Father's nose.

Well, he *had* been industrious. He had gone over every lesson five times, and he could rattle off all the exceptions in his German grammar and all the mountains in Asia, even those with the awfully hard names.

Really, it was rather pleasant to know your lessons well and rank with the good scholars. Now he should be able to crow over Asta. She often had to sit the whole afternoon with her fingers in her ears, mumbling and studying, and even then couldn't get her lessons sometimes, and would cry; but, of course, she was only a girl.

He would take this report to Uncle Isaac of Kingthorpe, too. Uncle Isaac was always questioning and probing to find out how he got on at school. Now he should see! Sharp whistling again pierced the air.

Another wonderfully interesting thing was that "Goodwill of Luckton" had arrived. He had seen it at Forsberg's wharf when he was going to school. At this thought Johnny Blossom broke

into a run. Darting through the little gate to their own back yard, he burst into the entry and, in the same headlong fashion, into the dining room. The family was already at the table.

"Here is my monthly report and 'Goodwill of Luckton' has come," exclaimed Johnny.

Father and Mother looked at the report. "Very good, John," said Father; and Johnny felt Mother's gentle hand stroking his hair.

"But what is it that has come?"

"'Goodwill of Luckton,' of course."

Johnny was gulping his soup with great haste.

"Express yourself clearly and eat properly."

Everything had to be so proper to suit Father.

"The apple boat, the one Mr. Lind and Mrs. Lind own, you know — that comes every autumn."

Yes, the apple boat. It was painted green as it had been last year; the sails were patched; the poorest apples lay in heaps on the deck, the medium sort were in bags, and the best apples were in baskets. In the midst of this tempting abundance Mrs. Lind, who was uncommonly stout, usually sat, knitting. When her husband was up in town delivering apples Mrs. Lind took care of the boat, the apples, and Nils and

everything. Nils, their son, was more to look after than all the rest put together, for he was the worst scalawag to be found along the whole coast.

John kept on eating and talking. "Nils is a bad boy, Mother. When he talks to his mother, he keeps the side of his face toward her perfectly sober; but he makes faces with the side toward us. It is awfully funny and we laugh; and Mrs. Lind thinks we are laughing at her, and then she scolds, and oh! her scolding is so funny!"

Shortly after dinner Johnny Blossom was out in the woodshed whittling a boat. How delightful and how queer that he should be "a credit to the school"! He would be awfully industrious now every single day; go over every lesson six times, at least.

This boat that he was making was going to be a fine one — Johnny Blossom held it out and peered sharply at it, first lengthwise, then sidewise — the finest boat any one had ever whittled. Every one who saw it would say, "Who made that beautiful, graceful boat?" Well, here was the boy who could do it!

One of these days he must carve out a big ship about half a yard long and make it an exact copy of a real ship.

Johnny Blossom lost himself in wondering whether, when it was finished, he shouldn't take the ship to school to show to the Principal. If he did, the Principal would, of course, praise him very much, for it would be an extraordinarily well-shaped, handsome ship.

Yes, Johnny Blossom decided that he would take it to school for the Principal to see. It should be painted and have real sails. Oh, dear! Then he should have to ask Asta to hem the sails! Horrid tease as she was, she sewed remarkably well. Girls weren't good for much else.

How would it be to make a sloop next—one exactly like the "Goodwill of Luckton"?

At this he threw down the boat which was to be so wonderfully graceful and rushed off toward the wharf. How stupid of him to stay at home whittling when the "Goodwill of Luckton" had come!

Of course there were several boys hanging around there — Aaron, Stephen, and Carl. Otherwise not even a cat was to be seen. Streets and wharf were deserted in the quiet noon hour. Mrs. Lind sat nodding upon the deck. Nils lounged on some bags at the front of the boat, amusing himself making faces. Mr. Lind was probably up in the town doing errands.

"Give us an apple," whispered Stephen to

Nils. Nils did not answer, but gave Stephen a sly look and then made a hideous face.

"Throw some ashore," suggested Johnny Blossom.

"Just one apiece," whispered Carl.

"Well, don't then, you miser!" said Aaron.

Suddenly Nils, with a slyer look than usual on his sly face, went down into the cabin. A minute after he came stamping up again.

"Mother, Mother! The coffee is boiling over. Hurry!"

Mrs. Lind waddled hastily across the deck and squeezed herself down the narrow stairway.

"Come now!" called Nils guardedly to the boys on shore. "Come now! Hurry up and take some apples."

The boys on the wharf did not wait to be called again but jumped upon the deck and rushed at the bags of fruit.

"Mother, Mother!" roared Nils. "Hurry! There are thieves at the apples! Oh, hurry!"

In an incredibly short time Mrs. Lind had come upstairs, and there stood Mr. Lind also, exactly as if he had shot up out of the ground.

Nils declared loudly: "Before I knew a thing about it, these boys rushed on board and began grabbing some of the best apples."

Oh, how Mr. Lind and his wife scolded as they seized the astounded boys! Mr. Lind held two of them and Mrs. Lind two — she had a remarkably strong grip — while Nils flew after a policeman. The frightened boys cried and begged to be set free. A crowd gathered on the wharf in no time.

Soon the policeman came. "You will have to go with me to the police station," said he to the boys. They tried to explain that Nils had invited them on board, but it availed nothing. "You go with me to the police station," was the only reply the policeman made to anything they said.

Oh, but it was horrid, having to go along the streets with him! Nils should have his pay for getting them into this trouble! At the police station their names were recorded and then the boys were allowed to go. Johnny Blossom, shamefaced and troubled, ran straight home.

In the afternoon the policeman called to talk with Father. Father was very serious and Mother looked frightfully worried. Sister Asta stared with open mouth. John had a bitter time of it while the matter was being settled, and afterward Asta's teasing voice followed him everywhere as she kept calling out:

"Credit to the scho-ol! Great credit! Wonderful credit! Credit to the scho-ol!"

Oh, how horrid, how horrid everything was! Well, he wouldn't go out any more today, that he wouldn't; he would stay in his room with the door locked. He had been so delighted with his report, and now even that gave him no pleasure. Of course he couldn't go to Uncle Isaac with it after this disgrace.

A sudden thought struck him. He would not keep the report any longer. To have "A credit to the school" upon it was too embarrassing after what had happened.

He had *not* stolen apples, he really had not; but he had been taken to the police station and his name, John Blossom, was written on the police records. Though he had not stolen apples, he had known very well that Mr. Lind and his wife would be angry if boys went on board and helped themselves to apples, even if Nils had said they might.

Pshaw! Everything was horrid. The boys at school would soon know all about it and then they would tease just as Asta did. No, he would not keep that report; he would give it back to the Principal; that was just what he would do. So Johnny Blossom, saying nothing

at home of his intention, went with determined step to the Principal's house. His cap, instead of being set jauntily far back on his head, was jammed well down over his eyes.

"Is the Principal at home?"

"Yes, come in."

The Principal was a large man with a thick, blond beard and sharp, blue eyes.

"Good day, Johnny Blossom! What did you want to see me about?"

"It is horrid, but" — great searching first in one pocket of his trousers, then in the other — "but if you will please take this report back" —

"Take it back? What do you mean, John?"

"Why, because it says here he is a credit to the school, and he isn't that — not now."

"What is that you say? Speak out, my boy."

The boy looked very little as he stood with his knees shaking before the big Principal.

"Because — because his name has been written in the police records today, and the policeman took him there, and so it was horrid that this report should say he was a credit" —

"Come, John. Tell me about it from the beginning."

"Why, Nils of the 'Goodwill of Luckton' got his mother to go down-stairs and then he called

us boys to come aboard and get some apples; and when we went he told his mother there were thieves on board; and he called the policeman."

"Nils asked you to come on board?"

"Oh, yes; but for all that I knew Mr. and Mrs. Lind would be angry. I knew that perfectly well. But I went, and then I wasn't a credit to the school; so if you will please take this report back" —

There was a short silence.

"I think you may keep the report," said the Principal at last. "For you will surely not do anything of the kind again, Johnny Blossom."

"No. I shan't have to be taken up by a policeman ever any more." Johnny shook his head energetically. "And I'm going to study hard. Thank you."

At the door he repeated his "thank you" as he bowed himself out.

When he was in the street he put the precious report into his pocket, whistling joyously a beautiful tune that his mother often played. Who cared for any one's teasing now? Even the boys might try it if they liked, for he was ready for them. The Principal knew all there was to know. Awfully kind man, that Principal!

CHAPTER IV
Aunt Grenertsen's Apples

THAT apple tree of Aunt Grenertsen's was too tantalizing! Big, beautiful apples hung there day after day, and nobody ever seemed to think of such a thing as taking one off. Aunt Grenertsen might, for instance, so easily say to old Katrina, her housemaid: "Shake down an apple or two for Johnny Blossom"; but no indeed! Far from it. Never in the world had she suggested anything of the kind, although he had been in there every single day since the apples had begun to turn.

It was a little farther to go home around past Aunt Grenertsen's, but he didn't mind that, for it was interesting to watch how the apples

grew and to see whether Katrina had gathered any. But day after day everything remained exactly the same. There hung the apples still — the only change being that they grew riper and riper and more tempting. Aunt Grenertsen sat gazing out of her window from behind the plants, and old Katrina, grumpy as ever, stood at the kitchen window peering over the sash curtain, in exactly the same way every day.

He was just sick and tired of seeing those apples in that good-for-nothing garden. Good-for-nothing it certainly was, and very, very old. There was only one apple tree besides the one Johnny was so interested in, but its fruit could scarcely be called apples at all. He would call them croquet balls — such hard green things as they were — hard as rocks. Of course if any of them were on the ground, he bit into them. In fact, he had eaten a good many of them first and last, but they were horrid things, anyway.

The currants in Aunt Grenertsen's garden were nothing to speak of, either. Awfully sour, small pinheads! The raspberries were small, too, but at any rate, they were sweet.

Not another thing was to be found in that garden — not a decent sugar pea nor a carrot

even; just some stupid mignonette and violets and other flowers that smelled sweet — as if they were any good! No, truly, Aunt Grenertsen's garden was not very pleasant.

For that matter, neither was she. She was not really his aunt and he was glad of it; but she was Mother's aunt, and so all the family called her Aunt Grenertsen, just as Mother did.

Aunt Grenertsen had lived in the little house on King Street for an age, ever since he could remember; and everything she had was very old-fashioned. There was a cuckoo clock, and a blue glass jar with dried rose-leaves in; and on the window sill an old gray cat blinked and purred among the plants.

Aunt Grenertsen was difficult to talk with — so contrary, somehow, even if not really cross, that it was very tiresome. She wasn't the least bit like Uncle Isaac of Kingthorpe, who was always kind and gentle, always pleasant. Oh, dear, no! Aunt Grenertsen wasn't like Uncle Isaac; far, far from it!

Suppose, for instance, that he went to her house for a little call, as he often did, for Mother liked him to go — and Aunt Grenertsen sometimes had exceedingly good cakes which she called "half moons"; and just now there were

these delicious ripe apples. During such calls she could be remarkably disagreeable. "What is the weather today?" she would say; and before he could answer, would add "Oh, well! No use asking you. Children never notice the weather." Or, "What kind of fish is there nowadays at the wharf? — but you wouldn't know that." Or, "Who is to preach tomorrow? Well there! I wonder at my asking you."

No, she never thought he knew anything about anything, and that was so exasperating! He knew very well what the weather was; he knew all the kinds of fish that were for sale at the wharf every day; and he also knew that the old minister was to preach tomorrow; but do you suppose Aunt Grenertsen would believe a thing he told her? "I can't depend on that," she would say.

Aunt Grenertsen certainly was difficult to talk with; and sometimes he did not even get a "half moon." He believed he wouldn't go there any more, or try to please either her or old Katrina, who was almost worse than Aunt Grenertsen.

Katrina wanted everything done just so; the garden gate must not only be shut but latched; he must walk in the middle of the path, and he must always use the kitchen door. If he went

to the other door, he was sure to hear "Dear, dear! How grand he is today! He must come in at the front door and make some one leave her work to let him in." No, indeed. He would not go all that way around by King Street any more. Their old apples could hang and hang there forever, for all he cared.

For fully four days Johnny Blossom did not show himself inside of Aunt Grenertsen's green-painted garden fence; but on the fifth day he thought it would be interesting after all to see whether the apples still hung on the tree. It seemed an age since he had looked at them, and it would be disappointing enough if they had been gathered.

No, luckily, there they hung. And Aunt Grenertsen was gazing out of the window from behind her plants, and Katrina peering over the sash curtains just as usual. Well, he would go in and see how Aunt Grenertsen was today. The front door was unlocked, so he could go in that way without inconveniencing her highness, Katrina.

"Good afternoon, Aunt Grenertsen. How do you do?" He sat down in the chair by the door, where he knew he was expected to sit.

"Good afternoon, Johnny Blossom."

Dead silence for a long time.

Ugh! he would have to try to talk.

"Mother has gone to a luncheon party today."

"I can well believe it," said Aunt Grenertsen. "People never stay at home in these days. They are forever flying about."

"Father was at a meeting last night."

"I haven't the least doubt of it."

Absolute silence again. If only the cuckoo in the clock would come out and call! But it would be almost a quarter of an hour before that would happen. Johnny Blossom racked his brain to think of something to talk about.

"We baked cookies at home yesterday," he said suddenly.

"Then I presume you ate more of them than was good for you."

Oh, no, Johnny Blossom had not over-eaten; he could easily eat some today, too; he had had only those that were burnt.

"Burnt, hey? Well, there's nothing a boy won't put into his stomach."

Aunt Grenertsen was unusually disagreeable today. Not a word could he say about the apples, because he had so often before brought up that subject.

"Well, I think I must go now," he said, rising slowly.

"Yes, you had better," said Aunt Grenertsen. But when he had gone into the hall she called, "Johnny Blossom!"

He looked in again.

"Why, there are those ripe apples. You might climb up in the tree for them, you are so small and light."

"Yes, Aunt Grenertsen. I'll go right up now, this minute."

"No. Come tomorrow. It is altogether too late this afternoon."

The next day, at a little past two, Johnny Blossom was again in Aunt Grenertsen's garden. He had gulped down his dinner at an alarming rate, and then hurried to King Street, stopping on his way to get Tellef; for there must be one person to climb and shake the tree and one to stand below and pick up the apples. However, Tellef must stay outside the garden until Aunt Grenertsen had been informed that Johnny had brought an assistant.

"Good afternoon, Aunt Grenertsen, here I am."

"Well, you are early enough I hope. I want

to say this much, Johnny Blossom, that I won't have it on my conscience that you should eat any half-rotten apples — and there are usually a good many half-rotten of this kind — but those that are cracked or bruised you may have, for they won't keep anyway."

"Thank you, Aunt Grenertsen."

"I suppose you can get along without Katrina's help."

"Oh, yes, perfectly. For that matter, I have a boy outside there who will be a fine helper. He's very quick and oh! awfully strong."

"I hadn't supposed great strength was necessary to pick a few apples."

"He's a very good boy, too, Aunt Grenertsen."

"Glad to hear it. Well, bring your paragon in and go to work."

At last Johnny Blossom and Tellef stood under the apple tree with a big basket.

My, oh, my! Just look at all the apples! There must be fully a half bushel — a good many for such a little old tree.

"You go up in the tree and shake it," said Johnny.

"Here I go," responded Tellef. He sprang to the tree, gripped the trunk with his knees and

was up in a trice. Vigorous shaking. Five big apples thumped to the ground.

"Five big ones and all of them bruised, so they are for us," shouted Johnny Blossom; and the apples vanished inside his blouse.

"Well, but I want some," answered Tellef from the tree.

"Of course. I just put them in here to keep."

Another shaking of the branches. Besides some decayed ones, four good apples fell, hitting the ground with such force that these, too, were crushed or cracked. Tellef was down on the instant. My, oh, my! but they were delicious apples. Neither of the boys had ever tasted any equal to them. A sharp knock sounded on Aunt Grenertsen's window, and Johnny hurried over there.

"It seems to me you do nothing but eat," came through the window.

"Oh, no. These are some that got smashed and you said we might eat those."

"Such rough shaking, I don't like. You must pick the apples."

"Yes, Aunt Grenertsen."

Up the tree went both the boys. They picked six apples, but found it impossible to reach any more. All the others hung upon thin old

branches that cracked if you but touched them, and would by no means bear a boy's weight. The boys tried and tried to get the apples, but the tempting things hung exasperatingly out of reach.

"No use," said Johnny. "I'll have to stand under the tree and hold the basket, while you shake the apples into it. Then they won't whack on the ground and bruise themselves."

First, however, the six perfect apples were laid carefully upon the porch steps.

John held the basket under a branch while Tellef shook it. Eight apples bounced and rolled in the garden path, but not one fell into the basket and not one but showed a bruise or a split.

"What a stupid you are to shake them off that way!" exclaimed Johnny.

"Not a bit. It is you who are stupid about holding the basket," retorted Tellef.

They stole glances at Aunt Grenertsen's window. Fortunately, she was not looking out and so had not seen the unlucky outcome of this attempt. Hastily thrusting the eight apples into their blouses, they both climbed the tree again and stretched and reached their utmost till one branch broke and the boys nearly tumbled from the tree.

"Well. We'll just have to shake them off."

"Yes, we must; but shake gently." Three much crushed and two that were bruised slightly, with, of course, a number of decayed ones that did not count.

"These two we'll lay on the steps."

Strangely enough, there were almost no apples left on the tree now, except those on a very slender branch. They would have to be shaken down, for no person alive could reach them. Violent shaking ensued and apples pelted down in a shower, every one landing with a thud that bruised or marred it somewhere. The boys gathered them hurriedly and deposited them under a gooseberry bush.

True as you live, there were no more apples on the tree! It was remarkable how little time it had taken to strip it. And on the steps lay only eight apples, and two of them were bruised! What would Aunt Grenertsen say at getting so few? Well, he must take them in to her.

"Here are the apples, Aunt Grenertsen. Aren't they beauties?"

"And where are the rest?"

"Why — these are all."

"From the whole tree? *Eight* apples?"

"Well, some were half-rotten, and you said yourself that we might eat" —

"I said no such thing," interrupted Aunt Grenertsen.

Johnny Blossom blinked his eyes and scarcely knew what to say, but suddenly had an idea. He would begin differently.

"But those that were bruised you said we might eat, and we have done that," said Johnny Blossom, frankly and virtuously.

"Indeed! You have done that, have you? Well — it looks as if they had all got bruised."

"Oh no, Aunt Grenertsen. Six of them are not bruised at all, and these two only the least bit."

"Well, well! What's done is done. I pity your stomachs, that's all I can say."

Oh, dear! Aunt Grenertsen wasn't comfortable to deal with — not a bit easy in fact — and never had been.

Johnny Blossom was glad enough to get out into the garden with Tellef again. The heap of apples under the gooseberry bushes was divided with great exactness. Aunt Grenertsen could not see over there from her window.

The boys walked slowly and lingered much on the way home, munching apples all the time; and their well-stuffed blouses were noticeably less

bulging when the boys finally parted at Johnny Blossom's gate.

"How did the harvesting of Aunt Grenertsen's apples go this afternoon?" asked Mother.

"Oh, very well," answered Johnny.

"Did she have many apples?"

"Why, some were half-rotten or all rotten, and a good many were bruised"—

"But of course you were very careful how you picked them?"

"Yes, very. We shook them into a basket. Those that were bruised, Aunt Grenertsen said we might have."

"Did she? And how many did Aunt Grenertsen get?"

"Oh"—Further probing on Mother's part to find out what Aunt Grenertsen's share of the harvest had amounted to, drew forth the truth, uttered with a show of enthusiasm.

"She had quite a good many—eight big beautiful apples—and six of them hadn't the least speck of a bruise on them anywhere."

"But poor Auntie! Do you mean to say she had only *eight* apples for herself? And she so fond of them too! How in the world could that happen when there was so much fruit on the tree?"

"It was queer there weren't more, but none of the apples would fall in the basket, and they *would* whack right down on the ground, and so they got bruised — and then we ate them, you see, Mother."

"Oh! I am really sorry for Aunt Grenertsen," said Mother. "I must see if I can't find something good to send her to make up for this. It was not at all nice of you, John — not at all kind. Poor Aunt Grenertsen who is so lonely and has so little of everything!"

Johnny Blossom blinked hard. He began to feel disgusted with himself. Just think of Aunt Grenertsen's being very fond of apples — and of Mother's feeling so sorry for her! Suddenly he rushed from the door. Perhaps Tellef had some apples left. Not even a core remained of his own.

Pshaw! At Tellef's they had eaten all the apples immediately on Tellef's arrival with them.

How trying it was that Aunt Grenertsen should be so particularly fond of apples! Poor thing! And besides, she was lonely, Mother had said, and had very little money. It was too bad.

If he only had something to give her — he himself. Of course Mother would find some-

thing, but he would like to, too. He hadn't a cent in his bank. What few cents he had saved had all been poked out long since, and he hadn't anything else either. Well, yes, he had that fine new cake of India ink Father had just given him; but Aunt Grenertsen surely did not draw with India ink.

There! Now he had an idea. She should have that rare postage stamp from Mozambique, she certainly should! The whole class and some of the big boys envied him his possession of that stamp and had begged and begged for it; but not one of them should get it, no indeed!

He found an old pill box, laid the Mozambique stamp carefully in it, and ran straightway to King Street.

Everything was as usual. He could scarcely bear to look at the tree he had gathered the fruit from, but finding two apples on the ground under the other tree, he picked them up and took them into the house. He certainly wasn't going to eat any more of Aunt Grenertsen's apples.

"Good afternoon, Aunt Grenertsen."

"Oh, is that you, back here already?"

"I found these apples out in the garden."

Aunt Grenertsen looked at them over her glasses.

"H'm — they are not bruised, these two."

Johnny Blossom made no answer to this remark, but got up quickly from his chair by the door and went over to the window where Aunt Grenertsen sat.

"I thought you might like to have this." And Johnny Blossom placed the pill box on the table and gazed expectantly into Aunt Grenertsen's wrinkled face.

"Pills?" said Aunt Grenertsen. "I have never taken pills in all my long life."

"It isn't pills, it isn't pills!" exclaimed Johnny Blossom, hopping about on one foot with joy, because Aunt Grenertsen would be so pleased when she saw what it was.

"Just look inside! Just look!" he continued.

Aunt Grenertsen opened the box.

"An old postage stamp," said she.

"Oh, it's a Mozambique stamp, Aunt Grenertsen," explained Johnny Blossom earnestly. "It is awfully rare. There isn't another one in the whole town, Aunt Grenertsen."

"Indeed?" Aunt Grenertsen looked at the little old stamp dubiously, turning it round and round.

"But why do you give it to me, Johnny Blossom?"

"Oh, because—because you only got eight apples, and Mother said"—

"What did Mother say?"

"Mother said that you liked apples so much—and that you were lonely; and, besides, I was ashamed of myself because Tellef and I had eaten so many of your apples."

"And so you want to give me this stamp?"

"Yes. Isn't it interesting, Aunt Grenertsen? Isn't it a beauty?"

He stood behind her chair, looking eagerly over her shoulder at the stamp.

"Aren't you glad to have it?"

"Yes, indeed; I thank you very much. And I want you to have a half moon today."

"Oh, no. I don't want anything."

"Yes, you surely must have one."

The "half moon" was brought forthwith and was eaten with great relish.

Light-hearted now, Johnny Blossom ran through the garden, fastening the gate carefully, while at the window an old face peered out from among the plants, through tear-misted spectacles. Then Aunt Grenertsen took the stamp and pasted it on the window pane nearest where she sat.

"That is a reminder of you," she said later to Johnny Blossom. And Johnny was proud to think that the interesting and rare Mozambique stamp should be a reminder of him.

But how queer old people are! thought Johnny Blossom.

CHAPTER V
The Red Buoy

ANY ONE would be sick of it! thought Johnny Blossom. He couldn't even appear in the street without people rushing to him to question and pry as to how it had happened, and how he had felt that time he lay out on the red buoy and they all thought at home that he was drowned. He was completely sick of it.

Even the minister had stopped him and questioned and quizzed like the rest; and when he had finished, he hit Johnny Blossom on the back with his cane (not hard, you know) and

said: "You surely are a little rascal, Johnny Blossom!"

Indeed he wasn't a rascal. The whole thing had just happened of itself. It was no plan of his, but it was just as unlucky as if it had been.

The new postmaster's sons were at the bottom of it really. Such pipestems from Christiania don't know anything anyway—and they get scared so easily! That's why they lose their wits when they get into trouble. No one would believe how silly they were! Still, they were good-natured and ready to join in anything, so they were jolly enough playfellows after all.

Early one afternoon the three boys, Olaf, Herman, and Johnny, had a great desire to go rowing. They peered everywhere around the wharf for a boat that they could use. Not a sign of one was to be seen; not a boat of any kind — to say nothing of one that they could borrow in such a hurry. So they went round to the Custom House wharf. True as you live, there lay a dory, with oars and everything, right down at the foot of the little steps. They wouldn't have dared to think of taking the boat if it had been at the big Custom House steps, but since it was at the little steps near the warehouse, it was probably not a Custom House boat at all.

Johnny Blossom, for his part, was quite sure it was not.

"Well, we'll take her," said Olaf.

It was a fine little boat. Johnny was captain and commanded grandly, giving many orders to the postmaster's sons — those silly pipestems from Christiania, who did not know anything.

Oh! there was the big English coal steamer that had been lying at the wharf several days unloading coal. Too bad that he had not had a chance to go on board that steamer! He had tried to go a number of times, but there was always one or another grimy sailor who chased him ashore. Ugh! Englishmen were horrid! The steamer was unloaded now and would surely sail tonight.

Farther out rowed the boys. Johnny Blossom boasted of the ships that sailed from the town, of the sea, and of the church tower that was the highest in Scandinavia, and the postmaster's boys boasted of the wonders of Christiania; and everything was very jolly indeed. They rowed past the big red buoy that lay farthest out — the buoy that is like an immense red pear floating and rocking on the water.

"Would you dare sit up on the big red pear?" asked Olaf.

"Pooh! That's nothing to do," said Johnny Blossom.

"Yes, but sit there alone while we row away?" said Olaf.

"You shall soon see whether I dare or not," returned Johnny.

They rowed to the buoy and he climbed out upon it.

"Now row away, row as far away as you like. It is perfectly glorious sitting here!"

Olaf and Herman plied the oars as hard as they could, while Johnny Blossom sat proudly erect upon the "red pear." He had never thought of its being possible for any one to sit here. Just think, only water far and wide around him! Yet here he sat entirely at his ease, could sit here just the same if a storm should blow up—that would be a small matter for Johnny Blossom. Now that the boys were away off behind the big coal steamer, any one might wonder how much farther they meant to row.

The wind began to blow and the pear rocked up and down. It was queer the way there came a whack from the sea against the buoy with every wave. The pear rocked more and more. My! oh, my! how the sea hit against it now! Almost hard enough to send the spray away up

to him. What had become of those silly postmaster's boys? He could see nothing of the boat anywhere. It was probably behind the wharf. Not a person was to be seen on the wharf now, either. It was so late that every one had gone home.

Johnny Blossom shouted: "Olaf! Herman!" No answer, only the sea's pounding. A big wave dashed over his legs, and the pear rocked and plunged frightfully.

All at once Johnny Blossom was afraid. Not a little afraid, but overwhelmed with great fear. Here he was alone out in the midst of the wide waters, with no one to see him, no one to hear him, and no one to help him. A great wave struck against the buoy, leaving his stockings dripping wet up to the knees.

"Oh, Mother! Mother!" screamed Johnny in terror.

Another wave came — a stronger one — and dashed even higher. He would be safer, perhaps, if he lay on his stomach and stuck his arms through the big ring that they fastened the ship's ropes to.

Oh, if he were only at home! Oh, those wicked postmaster's boys who had rowed away and left him! They should get their pay when — but

suppose he should die now! "Our Father who art in heaven." Johnny Blossom, with eyes closed, said the whole of the Lord's Prayer as he lay on his stomach on the red buoy. Now surely God would help him.

The buoy swayed and dipped and the wind howled. Suddenly he heard a different sound and turned swiftly to look. There was a boat right off there. Oh, if only! —

It was some Englishmen from the big coal steamer, and they were rowing straight toward the buoy, talking fast. Pshaw! how stupid it is when people talk English. Without waiting to say, "By your leave," they took Johnny Blossom from the buoy, put him into their boat, and rowed directly to the steamship. One of the sailors scooped up some salt water in his hand and splashed it over Johnny Blossom's tear-streaked face and laughed. Then Johnny laughed, too.

If it were only German the men spoke! He had studied German for a half year now and could have managed with that language pretty well, he thought.

Here they were alongside the steamer. Well, Johnny Blossom hadn't the least objection. How Olaf and Herman would envy him, that he

should go on board the big ship after all! The steamer was full of sailors who talked and laughed and tumbled him about in rough play till Johnny Blossom bubbled over with merry laughter that rang through the whole ship.

Soon a man took him to the upper deck to the stout, ruddy captain whom Johnny Blossom knew from having seen him on the street in the town. He pinched Johnny's ear and said a great many funny words to him, just as the other Englishmen had. Johnny pointed to the red buoy and shook his head for "No," and pointed toward the town and nodded for "Yes." With this he felt sure that the captain must know how the matter stood.

An oldish looking man wished Johnny to go below with him, and naturally Johnny did not need to be asked twice, even by signs! It was wonderful down there. He had never imagined there could be anything so fine on the dirty coal steamer; and just think! some crackers were brought out, and then if that funny man didn't set a whole jar of preserves before him, too, and give him a spoon! My, oh, my! Mother ought to see him now, eating with a big spoon right from the preserve jar!

Johnny Blossom ate plentifully, while the

strange man sat opposite with elbows on the table, looking at him and smiling. Suddenly the man took out a leather case and from it a photograph, which he handed across the table to Johnny. It showed two boys about Johnny's age. The man pointed to the boys and then to himself and smiled again, and Johnny understood that these were his boys.

How curious to think that this man had two boys and that they were English! He certainly was very fond of them — this queer man with the gray beard. Now he put the photograph into the case again and into his pocket, slapped his breast and smiled. Englishmen were certainly odd, thought Johnny. And those boys — just boys like himself — could speak English without studying it. Think of that!

The man then showed Johnny over the whole steamer. Above one of the hammocks hung a picture of the same two boys; and when they came to this, the man laughed again and laid his hand upon his heart.

Then he gave Johnny a whistle — a regular boatswain's whistle. He put it right into Johnny's pocket, and of course that meant that he wanted to give it to him. So Johnny Blossom shook hands with him and bowed his thanks.

Ah! this would be something to show to the boys at school. How he would blow and play on it.

How awfully good to him this man was! Johnny would like to ask him to take his greeting to those two boys. So Johnny pointed to the picture over the hammock, then to himself, and then far out over the sea, with his little arm stretched at full length. There! the man must surely understand anything as plain as that.

At this moment one of the sailors came to take Johnny Blossom up on deck again, for the row boat was going to the shore and Johnny was to go in it. He shook hands with all the sailors and bowed and said "Thank you." When he was in the row boat, the ship's deck was full of grimy-faced men, who stretched over the railing to look down at him.

Johnny Blossom swung his cap, then suddenly remembering his whistle, took that out and blew it hard. Then he laughed heartily and blew it once more. All the black faces up at the railing laughed also. After this farewell the boat was rowed to the shore and Johnny Blossom was soon running up the street.

Then began all the hue and cry. First, Squire Levorson stopped him. "What in the

world! Is this you? They are saying all over town that you are at the bottom of the sea."

"Far from it," answered Johnny Blossom, somewhat offended.

Next it was the telegraph operator, Mr. Nilsen. "Well, I must say! If here isn't the person every one is talking about — and as large as life!"

Pshaw! how silly people were! And now came Olea, the cook from his own home, weeping and wailing aloud. When she saw him she was ready to drop with astonishment. "Oh, you angel John! Are you risen from the dead? They brought us word that you were drowned."

"Not a bit," said John. "It was the fault of the postmaster's boys entirely. See what I've got." And Johnny Blossom took his English boatswain's whistle out and blew it, with beaming face.

No one was in the sitting room at home, nor in the library; but from Mother's room there came a sound as of some one crying. Johnny Blossom tramped in. There lay Mother on the couch, and Father sat by her side, and they were both sobbing as hard as they could.

"John!" screamed Mother, starting up. "Oh, Johnny! my boy, my boy! Is it really you?"

"Thought I was drowned, did you?" said Johnny Blossom loftily. "It never entered my head till afterwards that any one could get drowned sitting on the big red pear, you know. Mother, see here."

A frightfully piercing whistle resounded in the little room.

"Would you like to hear it again?" asked Johnny, radiant.

"No, no!" said Mother, with hands on both ears.

Just then Father grabbed John by the shoulder. Ugh! it was horrid when Father took hold that way, for it usually meant a whipping.

"Do you know what you deserve?" asked Father. Not a sound in reply. "You shall escape this time," continued Father. "I think you will remember your Mother's tears now better than a whipping; but another time — do you hear?"

"Yes." Johnny stared at his mother's tear-stained face.

"The postmaster and his boys came here and said that you had climbed up on the buoy farthest out. The boys had rowed back toward shore just for fun, but they met a man in a row boat who nabbed them because they had taken

the Custom House boat. The boys didn't say anything to him about you, sitting out there on the buoy" —

"There! Now you can see how stupid they are," interrupted Johnny Blossom.

"They ran home, crying, and told that you were out on the 'red pear'; but when the postmaster had got a boat and rowed out you were gone."

"I was on board the coal steamer — that's where I was. His name is Hobborn, Mother, and just listen! he set a big jar of preserves before me — I think it was raspberries — and I ate a lot, and then he gave me this whistle. Now I'll blow it." An ear-splitting blast followed.

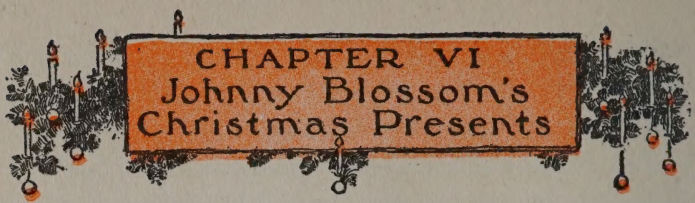
Mother hugged him to her and kissed him. "But that was a horrible present, John," she said, pointing to the whistle.

"Far from it," said John, "for now I need never be in danger any more if I just whistle. If I had had this when I lay out on the red pear, no one would ever have imagined I was drowned. A very useful present, it seems to me, and delightful."

"I can scarcely call it delightful," said Mother. All the rest of that afternoon, the sound of

whistling, incessant and penetrating, filled the pine grove. Blowing the English whistle in the house at any time was strictly forbidden.

In Johnny Blossom's opinion, after his experience on the coal steamer, Englishmen were the most delightful people on the face of the globe.



MY, oh, my! Tomorrow would be the day before Christmas and Johnny Blossom hadn't thought about a single present yet, for any one. He would have to hurry now, though after all he wasn't in such a bad fix, for he had some money — fifty cents, in fact — and that was surely enough and to spare.

He ought to give twelve Christmas presents in all: to Father and Mother, three sisters, both the maids, Jeremias the wood-cutter, Uncle Isaac of Kingthorpe, Miss Melling (Uncle's housekeeper), Miss Jorgensen, who stayed with them last summer, and Tellef, his special boy friend.

This wasn't the first year he had given presents, no, indeed! He had given some last year and the year before, but then Mother had helped him. This year he was going to plan them all by himself. Not a single person, not even Mother, should get the least idea of any of the presents beforehand.

After all, should he give Miss Jorgensen a present or not? Miss Melling there was no question about. She was always giving him presents, and she wasn't the worst person in the world, even if she was so fussy about boys wiping their feet. The last time he was at Kingthorpe she had given him a silver pencil holder without any reason whatever! It wasn't his birthday or anything. Yes, he would certainly give her something — that was settled.

The hardest to find presents for were Uncle Isaac and Jeremias. Poor Jeremias was sick now; he had been in bed for a whole month with pains in his back and everywhere. Johnny Blossom had been to his house to see him every day that he had thought of it, and that was almost every day. Jeremias lay there alone all day long, except that Maria Kopp went in morning and evening to look after him a little. It was easy enough to get into the little house, for it was never locked. Any one could lift the latch and step in; then the thing to do was to get Jeremias a dipper of water and to fix up the fire. Jeremias would say, "Thank you kindly, sir" (he always said that), and then Johnny Blossom would dash out, fastening the door again with only the heavy old latch.

At home that day they had been baking the Christmas cakes. Johnny Blossom had eaten not a little of the raw dough, and his sister Asta and he had made some cakes of remarkable shapes (though rather dingy from much handling), which they were allowed to bake.

It was while they were busy with the cakes that it had dawned upon Johnny Blossom that there was no time to spare, and that he must decide upon his presents at once.

The present for Father was an easy matter. The ruler that Johnny had just finished in the sloyd class was exactly the thing; and Mother should have the knife box. Carve their names nicely on the things, and those two presents would be ready.

Then he would make — h'm — seven baskets of pretty colored paper and fill them with peppermint drops. Everybody liked peppermint drops.

This left only Uncle Isaac and Jeremias and Tellef, and there would be about twenty cents to spend on their presents. Oh, yes! He could manage very well.

Suddenly he had a brilliant idea. That beautiful frame that he had carved in the autumn, he would give that to Uncle Isaac, with

a pretty card on which he would write: "A hearty Christmas greeting from an affectionate boy. Johnny Blossom."

Jeremias should also have a beautiful card, but that would have to have a frame of paper pasted round it. And on the card there should be a text from the Bible, because Jeremias was so awfully fond of texts. If he could only find the right one! At first he thought he should have to ask his mother, but decided that he would choose one all by himself.

There! he had it! Not that he was altogether sure of its being a text exactly, but it was so beautiful! Then Johnny Blossom, with his head on one side, his little snub nose almost touching the paper, wrote, with extraordinary slowness, because the writing was to be so very, very good:

God will never, never forsake thee.

Pshaw! That was always the way! The more pains you took, the worse was the writing. Some of the letters were awfully small and crooked and others were too big; and the whole thing slanted down hill so that there was scarcely room for his name underneath in the corner; and of course his name must be there.

Well, there was nothing to do about it. He

had no more cards so he should have to use this. With a dark brown paper frame and a red cord it would not be so bad after all. Johnny Blossom put his head first on one side and then on the other and scrutinized the card as a whole. No, it really was not bad.

For Tellef he would buy some dates — they were so good — and with this settled, all his presents were planned.

On the day before Christmas, big, soft snowflakes drifted slowly down from a lowering gray sky. The snow melted as soon as it fell, and from the sea a raw, wet wind came whining in; but there might have been worse weather, and Johnny Blossom, at any rate, was well content. He was going out to distribute his presents today. It was so pleasant to take them himself to the different persons.

First he went to Miss Jorgensen's, for she lived nearest, in her own tiny white house. She was in the kitchen washing dishes when Johnny Blossom's little nose showed itself at the kitchen door.

"Well, well! Is it you?"

Yes, it was he, and would she accept a little Christmas present? Johnny Blossom held out

JOHNNY BLOSSOM'S CHRISTMAS PRESENTS

to her the fancy paper basket filled with peppermint drops.

"Set it down somewhere — my hands are wet. I never eat peppermint candy, but I thank you all the same. Is every one well at home?"

"Yes, very well."

Johnny Blossom took his leave in some disappointment. Miss Jorgensen wasn't a bit nice — she was simply horrid. Oh, well, he didn't mind. Anyway, she couldn't say that no one had given her a Christmas present.

Johnny Blossom went on to Jeremias the wood-cutter's. The wind blew straight into the room the minute the door was opened, and Jeremias groaned. He looked awfully old today. Very gray indeed was his stubby beard and very dull were his eyes as he lay there on his blue pillow.

"Have you come to see me in all this bad weather?" said Jeremias.

"This is delightful weather," said Johnny Blossom, although just then another wild gust of wind made Jeremias's little house shake violently.

"Here is a Christmas present for you," said John. "It is to hang on the wall so you can see it, Jeremias. Isn't it pretty?"

"Yes, indeed, that's a fine piece of work!"

"Did it all myself," said Johnny Blossom, with some pride.

"Well, well! You do know how to make things!" said Jeremias admiringly.

A nail was driven in the wall near the one that held the big silver watch, and the Christmas present was hung on it at once in plain sight.

"God will never, never forsake thee," read Jeremias as his crooked old finger pointed along the slanting line. "There is balm in those words, Johnny Blossom," he said slowly.

Old people were queer, thought John, for "balm" was something that was used for wounds — he knew that very well — and yet there lay Jeremias and said that there was balm in those words, "God will never, never forsake thee."

"Yes," said Johnny Blossom, for he saw that Jeremias expected him to answer.

It really looked very pretty hanging there on the wall.

"How do they manage about the wood at your house nowadays?" asked Jeremias.

"Oh, very well," replied John. Then he happened to think that Jeremias might be disappointed to hear that it made no difference whether he was able to look after the wood or

not, so Johnny added quickly, "Mother says that they don't split the wood fine enough."

Jeremias was plainly enlivened. "There! Isn't that what I have always said!" he exclaimed. "Wood should be split just so. Kindlings ought to be light and pleasant and coquettish to make the fire dance."

"Yes," said Johnny Blossom.

What a great one Jeremias was to use queer words!

"Well, Merry Christmas, Jeremias!"

"Thank you kindly, sir. It won't be lonesome now that I have that to look at," and his crooked finger pointed up to the little brown paper frame hanging by its red cord.

John now started on his way to Kingthorpe. One of his pockets was weighted down with a big cornucopia of dates, for he planned to drop in at Tellef's on his way home; and from another pocket protruded the greater portion of the frame he was to present to Uncle Isaac.

Kingthorpe was quiet and stately and a little awe-inspiring as usual. Miss Melling had gone to town and Uncle Isaac was ill in bed. After a little thought, Johnny Blossom sent the frame in to his uncle by the servant, with his best Christmas wishes. The servant was in livery

and always carried a silver tray in his hand. Even when Uncle Isaac had nothing but gruel, he had it on a silver tray!

Johnny Blossom was nearly out of the grounds on his way home when the servant came running after him to tell him that his uncle wanted him. Johnny turned back with great delight. He had known well enough that Uncle Isaac would wish to see him after receiving such a beautiful present.

Uncle Isaac lay in the big carved bedstead. My, oh, my! how pale he was! almost as pale as Jeremias the wood-cutter.

"Sit here beside me," said Uncle Isaac. "Thank you very much for this beautiful Christmas present." The frame stood on a table near the bed.

"Yes, but you mustn't look at that corner, for there's a tiny piece off there; nor right there either; and here it is badly carved, as you see, Uncle Isaac. But if you hold it like this and just look at the whole — why, it isn't so bad," said Johnny Blossom, beaming.

"I will remember," said Uncle Isaac. "I am to hold it sideways and just get the general view when I look at it."

"The writing might have been nicer, too,"

said Johnny apologetically, "but I had such a scratchy, bad pen."

"I like it very much just as it is," replied Uncle Isaac.

There came a little pause. Johnny felt somewhat abashed and scarcely knew what to talk about.

"Jeremias the wood-cutter is ill in bed, too," he said suddenly.

"Is that one of your acquaintances?"

"Yes. I know him very well. I go in to see him almost every day."

"Tell me a little about him."

"He has pains in his back — right there — tearing his back to pieces, he says; and he lies there alone all day except when Maria Kopp or I go to see to him. His house is never locked; any one can go right in. I've just been there with a Christmas present for him."

"What did you give him, little John?"

"A Bible text in a frame and with a cord to hang it by. This was the text, 'God will never, never forsake thee.'"

"And was he pleased?"

"Yes, he said it was *balm*."

"Did he say that?" And the wonderful, far-seeing expression that Johnny Blossom could

never understand came over Uncle Isaac's face.

"The wood-cutter is right. It is balm," said Uncle Isaac finally.

Well! Here lay Uncle Isaac with the green silk eiderdown puff, with the servant in livery always carrying a silver tray; and there lay Jeremias the wood-cutter on his blue homespun pillow, with the wind howling at his very bedside — and both of them said that there was balm in those words! Johnny Blossom thought it was very queer.

"Some presents will go over to your house this evening," said Uncle Isaac when he said good-by.

My, oh, my! Johnny Blossom hopped over every gutter he came to on his way home. First over the gutter and then back again and over again just because everything was so unspeakably joyful, because it was Christmas Eve, because Uncle Isaac was going to send some presents. They were sure to be wonderful presents, those Uncle Isaac sent!

He met Tellef's littlest sister on the street.

"See here!" he said to her; "here is a Christmas present for Tellef; but just as surely as you meddle the least bit with the paper, I'll send

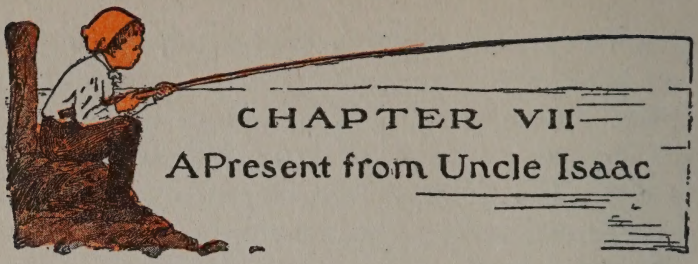
a snowball right through your head. So now you know what to expect."

The little girl went straight into the house holding the cornucopia of dates stiffly with both hands, while Johnny Blossom, with snowball ready, stood and watched her.

No, she didn't meddle with the package at all. Everything had gone well. Johnny Blossom took careful aim and sent the snowball flying toward the flagstaff at his own home.

The church bells began to ring, ushering in the holy tide. Christmas Eve! Oh, he must hurry, hurry home!

Bim! Boom! How the great bells chimed!



CHAPTER VII—
A Present from Uncle Isaac

THE unexpected certainly happened to Johnny Blossom that day. He had just swung round on the road leading toward Kingthorpe, with no thought of going the whole way, for Uncle Isaac was ill and had gone to a sanitarium, and there wasn't the least bit of fun to be had just in Kingthorpe itself with all its elegance. So early in the summer as this there were no ripe berries in the garden; and he must not go into the stables, for Carlstrom the coachman was a regular crosspatch.

"Be off with yourself, boy!" he would always say if Johnny Blossom but put his nose in at the stable door.

Carlstrom was a Swede, with a big black moustache whose ends stuck straight out in the air. He looked exactly like a stylish colonel to say the least — a very cross colonel though! No, there was no use going to the stable.

The cow-barn was under the rule of a Swiss who was almost as cross as Carlstrom. He always said that the cows ought to be sleeping; so Johnny Blossom got the idea that the cows at Kingthorpe never did anything but lie and sleep.

Inside the big fine house there couldn't be any fun either. Only those stately halls and magnificent rooms, one after another, with handsome furniture upholstered in silk damask, with great gold-framed mirrors, but with the shades always drawn down. The rooms were so immense that every footstep echoed in them. And oh! how careful one had to be for the sake of that miserable china that Uncle Isaac had collected so much of. In the cabinets it was no trouble, but when it stood on tiny little tables, Johnny Blossom did not like it at all. He scarcely dared to breathe when he went anywhere near the tables lest he should knock something off. Uncle Isaac had once shown him all the china and explained how old and rare and precious it was.

"This cup Marie Antoinette drank from, and this vase belonged to the Bonapartes. This flagon is from an English royal palace of the sixteenth century."

Johnny Blossom stood and stared. For his part he would rather have his own mug at home with "For a Good Boy" upon it than all these fine antiques that so many old mouths had drunk from!

Poor Uncle Isaac! He was sick now again — worse, in fact. He had heart disease, Mother said. Jeremias the wood-cutter also talked of a pain in his heart, but since he had begun to rub himself all over with kerosene, he had become much better. It smelled dreadfully in Jeremias's little hut, but he *was* better. Johnny Blossom would certainly write to Uncle Isaac and tell him that all he had to do to cure himself of the pain was to rub himself with kerosene.

To this point in his meditations had Johnny Blossom come just as he reached the telephone pole whence he could see the big entrance gates to Kingthorpe Park; and there was the handsome new carriage rolling out through the gates that very moment! Carlstrom sat on the box. My! How stylish he looked today! His moustache ends stood out in the air more stiffly than usual, and he never once glanced at Johnny Blossom standing below in the dusty road. Back in the carriage sat Miss Melling, Uncle Isaac's housekeeper, with a white feather in her hat

waving up and down. At her side lay a queer package of many yellow sticks tied together. What in the world could that be?

Johnny Blossom took off his hat and bowed. Carlstom looked straight ahead; but when Miss Melling caught sight of Johnny, there was a great to-do.

"Why, there he is! Stop, Carlstrom, stop! Johnny Blossom! Johnny Blossom!" she called, twisting herself round in the carriage. "You are just the person I was going to town to see," she continued. "I had a letter from your Uncle Isaac saying that you were to have this fishing rod at once."

Johnny Blossom looked very small standing in the road beside the big carriage. The crown and brim of his hat gaped widely apart on one side, and out of the opening stuck a lock of dark brown hair. His blue and white striped blouse had a daub of pitch in the middle of the front; and since Johnny Blossom knew it was there, he held a little brown hand over it, while he gazed up at the double chin of the imposing Miss Melling.

"See here! Why shouldn't you take it right now? To tell the truth, I can't imagine what a little boy like you should be doing with such a handsome fishing rod as this. I won't say how

much it cost — it was very expensive, you may be sure. Well, perhaps you had better ride with us back to town again, although you are so dirty, you are scarcely fit for the carriage."

Johnny Blossom looked up wistfully but dubiously. Probably he was too dirty.

"Oh, well! you may get in," said Miss Melling, not ungraciously.

Seldom, indeed, did he have the honor of riding in the Kingthorpe carriage, because Carlstrom and Miss Melling were both so fussy, and poor Uncle Isaac never went to drive. As they rode along Miss Melling showed Johnny how to put the rod together. My, oh, my! How amazingly long it was! Johnny stood it up like a flagstaff and his face was radiant.

"Has Uncle Isaac trouble with his heart?" asked Johnny, thinking he would tell about the kerosene cure.

"Rich people have trouble everywhere," said Miss Melling curtly. "Sit still or you'll fall out of the carriage."

Johnny Blossom sat as still as a stone for about two minutes; but then they drove past a great linden tree and he absolutely had to stand up to see how near the top of the tree he could reach with his fishpole.

A PRESENT FROM UNCLE ISAAC

"Dear, dear!" said Miss Melling. "I think you had better get out before we have an accident."

The carriage was stopped and Johnny Blossom with his long fishing rod was helped out unceremoniously.

"Thank you for the drive and for the rod," said he, bowing.

Then Johnny Blossom sprang into a run and dashed homeward. My, oh, my! How astonished the family would be over such a magnificent fishing rod!

The moment he arrived, the whole household was called on to admire it — Father, Mother, three sisters, and the maids — but no one must touch it or even go very near it but himself. Dagny put one little wet finger out toward it, but at this Johnny Blossom became red with fury.

"Are you crazy? You'll ruin it completely!" he shouted. The little wet finger was drawn hastily back.

Where the precious rod should be put was a momentous question. Unfortunately it was too long to be accommodated in his own room, where he could guard it best.

Johnny Blossom's room was a very tiny one, under the slope of the roof, but small as it was,

he could never keep it in order. The rug before the bed was always in a heap; and papers, skates, bows and arrows, and boots and shoes were strewn over the floor. There was a little space on the table and the commode, but on the floor you could scarcely find a bare spot.

"How this room does look!" Mother was continually saying.

"Well, that is because I study here," said Johnny Blossom.

Strangely enough, Mother could not understand what studying had to do with everything being scattered over the floor; but at any rate, to make space for the fishing rod in the little room was plainly impossible. Of course he could not think of taking the rod apart. Well, it would have to be left on the veranda tonight. What if some one should take it? Haunted by this dreadful thought, Johnny Blossom was very wakeful. He tossed and turned for a long time before he finally fell asleep.

The next morning Johnny awoke early and was wide awake at once. That fishing rod from Uncle Isaac — out on the veranda — suppose some one had taken it! He put on his clothes in the greatest haste. Later he would wash himself and dress properly, but the only thing

now was to see whether the fishing rod was safe. Yes, wonderfully enough, there it was. No one had touched it, so far as he could see.

How still, how still the world was! How fresh and cool! The sun was shining now on the big pine trees back of the house and their trunks were deep red in the strong light. What a fragrance came from the garden — the rich scent of roses, particularly — and how very damp the garden path was! My, oh, my! The dew was certainly like pearls, scattered over the grass — shining white pearls. Johnny Blossom looked at the clock on the church tower. *Two minutes before five.* Pshaw! so early! Oh, well! Never mind. It was all right. He could do what he liked until the rest of the family got up.

First, he would try fishing far out over the flower beds with his rod. There! he had caught and broken off a big, dark red rose. The well was naturally a better place to fish. Johnny Blossom fished up the most incredible things from that well. He first threw them in, of course, and then it was a tremendous piece of work to get them out again — leaves, flowers, his own straw hat — yes, it was certainly an extra fine fishing rod. He would write at once to Uncle Isaac and thank him for it.

How pleasant that no one was up yet, and that he could settle himself cosily at Mother's writing desk! Uncle Isaac had been his godfather at baptism, so Johnny Blossom wrote:

"*Dear Godfather:* A thousand thanks for the fishing rod. I am so happy. It catches everything splendidly. This afternoon I am going to fish in the bay. If you have a pain in your heart, just rub yourself with kerosene, Jeremias the wood-cutter says. He smells like a lamp, but he is well now and walks out with a stick. It's nothing if you *do* smell if you can only be well."

Johnny Blossom could think of nothing more to write about, though he stared long and hard at the walls. His examination report? No, he would not write about that, for there were some 9's for conduct and some marks for lessons that were not as high as one might wish. No, there was not an atom more to write. So the letter was signed:

"Your affectionate JOHNNY BLOSSOM."

After his writing, he went to the wharf and fished for a while. As it happened he caught nothing, but it was fun enough just to put out the rod and draw it in again.

Suddenly the maid Lisa appeared.

"You are to hurry right home, John."

Father and Mother sat in the study, Mother with her handkerchief in her hand and with red eyes.

"We have something to tell you, my boy," said Father. "Uncle Isaac has been very sick."

"Yes, but I have just written to him that if he will rub himself with kerosene he will get well."

"Uncle Isaac has no further need of anything," said Mother. "He died last night, little John."

Mother began to cry again, and there came a lump in Johnny Blossom's throat. No, he would *not* cry. Big boys ought never to cry.

"If any one goes straight into the Kingdom of God, Uncle Isaac will," said Mother.

It was of no use; he must cry. With his head in his mother's lap he cried hard. Mother stroked his head gently. "Uncle Isaac wished it so much himself, my boy. He was eager to go to God," she whispered.

"Yes, but it is so sad."

That afternoon Johnny Blossom sat crouched on the stone steps leading to the road. The fishing rod lay beside him, but he did not feel like going fishing. He sat with his elbows on his knees and his head in his hands, thinking of

Uncle Isaac. It might easily be that just now, this minute, Uncle Isaac stood outside that great golden gate—the gate that leads into Paradise—and knocked on it. To think that God can hear a man's little knock. Why, that gate is surely as big as — yes, as the tallest pine tree over there, and all of gleaming gold; and God looks and throws the gate wide open of course, for he sees it is Uncle Isaac. And so Uncle Isaac goes into the Kingdom of Heaven.

If there had only been a chance to thank him for the fishing rod! Johnny Blossom had some thought of asking God to thank Uncle Isaac for him, but he put it hastily aside. No, he was sure that would not do.

Kingthorpe. Oh! he should like less than ever to go there now. Never, never in the world would he enter that grand place again! Miss Melling and Carlstrom might have it all to themselves, for anything he cared.

CHAPTER VIII
Uncle Isaac's Will

JOHNNY BLOSSOM was the only child present among all the people who had assembled to hear the reading of Uncle Isaac's will. He had wished that he might go home instead of roaming aimlessly, as he had been doing for a long time, about the grounds which seemed today more solemnly quiet than ever.

Perhaps he might find Lars Berget, who worked in the stable under Carlstrom, but who was always pleasant and had a great deal to tell about the different horses. Why, there was Lars now. Johnny scarcely recognized him in his new black clothes.

"They are asking for you, John," said Lars. "The will is going to be read now, and we must all be in the library together, they say, to hear — right and proper — who shall be master of Kingthorpe after this."

"Can't you and I go to the stable instead?" ventured Johnny. "It will be so tiresome in the house."

No. Lars was firm. Johnny must go to the library.

Assembled there were the family and those who were connected with the estate in any way — the people from the Works and the wharf, the servants of the house and from about the place. The great room was packed so full that it was barely possible for Johnny and Lars to get inside the door.

John's uncle, the Admiral, stood at the end of the table reading from big sheets of paper. He read something about money, but Johnny Blossom could not understand a bit of what was meant, and found himself very uncomfortable standing squeezed in among all these grown-up people.

Suddenly he heard his own name. "John Christopher Winkel Blossom," read the Admiral. That was Johnny's own name exactly. Uncle Isaac had often said that there was no one among all the relatives who had the whole of the old name now except Johnny Blossom.

"It is therefore my last wish that my grandnephew, John Christopher Winkel Blossom, inherit after me my estate of Kingthorpe, whole and undivided, including the mansion and park,

the Works, the Bay Point wharves, the Holmen sawmill" —

The Admiral read on and on.

Lars poked Johnny in the side. "Just listen to that, boy!"

From the farther end of the hall came the query: "Is he here? Is Johnny Blossom here?"

"Yes, here he is," piped a shrill, boyish voice from the doorway.

"You are to come forward," said the Admiral. It was so still that the rustle of papers in the Admiral's shaking hand could be heard throughout the immense room. Johnny Blossom squeezed himself through the throng.

Every one looked at him as he stood beside the Admiral — such a little boy, with comical, freckled nose and smooth, brown hair. He looked up at his big, stalwart uncle who was reading about him, Johnny Blossom!

"I believe that this boy has the qualities that will enable him to meet rightly the serious responsibilities imposed by a large property and great wealth. His character is sound through and through, and he seems to have been endowed in his cradle with a fine understanding of the needs and sufferings of his fellowmen.

If this grows, he will understand, when he himself has become a man, why Uncle Isaac of Kingthorpe chose him of all others to carry forward the family traditions in this prominent station of life. God be with you, Johnny Blossom!"

The stillness of the crowded room had grown more impressive. "Do you understand?" asked the Admiral.

"No," answered Johnny frankly, looking up at his uncle and shaking his head energetically.

"Uncle Isaac has made you his chief heir. You are the owner of Kingthorpe, my boy."

Johnny Blossom took instant alarm. Should he be obliged to live at Kingthorpe in these big, solemn rooms?

"No," said he hastily — and his clear young voice, though emphatic, had a note of childish fear — "no, I don't want to, Uncle; I don't want to stay here now that Uncle Isaac is dead" —

"How old are you?" broke in the Admiral.

"Eleven years old in four months and"—he began to reckon exactly how many days over there were before he should be eleven years old, but he did not have time because the Admiral lifted him suddenly and stood him on the table.

Right up on the top of the handsome library table!

"Here he is, friends," said the Admiral, "for any of you to see who have not known him before, though I think you all do know him well."

A subdued murmur of assent ran through the room. Yes, indeed. Of course they all knew Johnny Blossom.

"And we must hope," continued the Admiral, "that this boy will fulfil all the expectations that are centered in him"—

Johnny Blossom thought that the room had become stiller than ever. A strange, wonderful feeling swept over him. There was something serious, something that he alone was to be responsible for, something expected of him that no one, no other person, could help him with.

"And with honor to his family fill that responsible position in life which great wealth will oblige him to occupy."

"We hope, too," went on the Admiral, "that he may have inherited also that noble spirit which was so marked a characteristic of our dear Uncle Isaac."

There was again a moment of utter silence, through which broke suddenly Johnny Blossom's clear little voice:

"I can *never* be as kind as Uncle Isaac!"

A smile went round, but Mother was crying and Father, with arms folded, was looking up earnestly at Johnny. From amidst the group of workmen, old Rolfsen, foreman at the wharf, elbowed his way to the table.

"Well," said he, pausing after each word of his speech, as was his custom, "well, the old gentleman was a good man, as we all know — we who worked for him. He was always good to us, never anything but good. But now there is only this to say: we wish to bid this boy welcome. We know him, and it will surprise me if he does not prove the same sort as the old gentleman. And that is the reason we welcome you, Johnny Blossom."

Old Rolfsen reached out a gnarled, rough hand to Johnny and all the rest of the workmen came, one by one, and shook hands with him. It was queer, but it was pleasant, too, for he knew them all and he smiled at them as they greeted him. Lars Berget gripped his hand so hard that it really hurt. And just think! Even Carlstrom came and made a beautiful bow (My! how stiff his moustache ends were today!), and to crown all, Miss Melling pressed forward and actually courtesied! At this Johnny Blossom

was so astounded that he had to look over at his mother.

Later, when the working people had gone, there was a tremendous amount of solemn talk between Father and the Admiral and the other uncles. Johnny Blossom did not understand a bit of it, but stood beside his mother, who was still crying a little, though Johnny could not see that what they talked of now was anything to cry over.

When his parents were finally ready to go, Johnny Blossom thought they would walk home as usual, but, true as you live, Carlstrom was waiting with the handsome black horses and the landau with the damask cushions — a much grander equipage than the one which had brought them to Kingthorpe. They had had the brown horses then.

All the uncles shook hands with Johnny very ceremoniously. People were still standing around the steps at the entrance to the mansion and in the park along the avenue where the carriage would go, and Johnny Blossom could hear them saying, "Here he comes! — the heir of Kingthorpe!"

Again little Johnny Blossom had a feeling that something was expected of him. So he

stood up, put his heels together, bowed as well as he could in the moving carriage, and said: "Good-by! I thank you all. Good-by!"

At the far edge of a group stood Lars Berget, who swung his hat in the air and ventured a faint, "Hurrah!" No one joined in it, however, for they bethought them of Uncle Isaac.

Johnny Blossom sat down again with wonder in his eyes. It was all so amazingly queer. Suddenly his mother said, "You must not think, little John, that your father and I are altogether glad about this."

No, it had not occurred to Johnny Blossom that it was anything to be particularly glad about.

"May God help us to guide you aright!" added Mother.

Every one they met as they rode along turned around and stared at Johnny. It was very embarrassing, really, to be the heir of Kingthorpe.

When the carriage stopped at the garden gate at home, Carlstrom asked whether the *young gentleman* would not like to ride on the new saddle horse. He could guarantee that it was safe. Now indeed was Johnny Blossom altogether dumbfounded. What had got into Carlstrom today? He was usually so cross.

"We will consider that later," said Father.

Why was it necessary to consider such an absolutely certain thing? Of course he wished to ride. It could easily happen that Carlstrom would be as cross as usual after today and never offer the horse again. He knew Carlstrom! But Father had a very sober face, and when he looked like that there was no use saying anything. So Johnny Blossom darted into the house and raced around to find Asta and the maids, to tell them the remarkable happenings of the afternoon.

There they were, all of them, down in the syringa arbor — Olea the cook, Lisa the nursemaid, Asta, Andrea, and Dagny.

"Now you shall hear!" shouted Johnny, dashing into the arbor. "Just think! I was put up on the library table, and all the people came and shook hands with me; old Rolfsen began it, and he made a kind of speech for me; and Lars Berget wanted to shout 'Hurrah!' when we drove out. And if all this isn't true, you may chop my head off." Johnny Blossom's eyes shone. He was tremendously in earnest.

Olea the cook knitted slowly and thoughtfully.

"It would be just like you to stand on the table," she said dryly. "And if the people had

any bringing up, of course they shook hands with you as with everybody else."

"No. Nobody stood on the table but me," said Johnny Blossom. "And they didn't shake hands with any one else either; and that is as true — as true"—

"Humph! It's very likely that they paid their respects to such a great man as you!" said Olea.

"My uncle the Admiral made a speech about me, too," continued Johnny Blossom.

"The boy is crazy," said Olea, knitting on in unbroken calm.

"What did Uncle say?" asked Asta.

"He said — he said — that I must fill the station with honor; I didn't understand exactly what that meant, but he said it because I am to have Kingthorpe. But I will *not* live there; they may all be sure of that."

"He is crazy as a loon!" said Olea. But Lisa the nursemaid was more interested.

"You are to have Kingthorpe, did you say?"

"Yes, my uncle the Admiral said so; he read it from a great big paper — he read out my whole name. JOHN CHRISTOPHER WINKEL BLOSSOM, he read; and that is as true — as true"—

"For the land's sake!" said Lisa, laying John's trousers, which she was patching, down in her lap.

"Well, if that isn't the greatest I ever heard in all my days," said Olea. "However, I don't believe it. It is just some of your tomfoolery, John, you rascal."

"Here comes Mother and you shall hear for yourself," shouted John. "Didn't I stand on the table, Mother? And shan't I have Kingthorpe, Mother?" Mother assented soberly.

"Yes, my boy."

John looked triumphantly at Lisa and Olea.

"Now you see what silly nincompoops you are — never believing a single thing I tell you."

"John dear," said Mother, "you are not to use such expressions."

Well, Lisa and Olea were really very contrary both of them. What would they say if they knew how every one had been calling him the heir of Kingthorpe? On the whole it was rather pleasant to be called that, although somewhat embarrassing. He would not speak of it to Olea and Lisa after all — not yet, anyway. They were both staring at him in open-mouthed wonder.

CHAPTER IX
One Day in Vacation

OH, how pleasant it was to lie in bed like this in the morning now that it was vacation! Not to have Lisa the nursemaid popping her head in at the door and saying, "John, it is time to get up. You must hurry, too." That was what she always said.

Just to lie here and think!

How people did pry and talk about all that Kingthorpe heir business! They seemed to think it something remarkable. The minute he showed himself in the street, people called to him and asked him if he wasn't awfully glad.

What a crazy idea! Glad, when it had all come about only because Uncle Isaac was dead — dear, good, kind Uncle Isaac! Every time Johnny Blossom thought of him a lump came in his throat. Then he would whistle to try to get the lump away, but whistling did not help

greatly, for he was very sorry and missed Uncle Isaac so much. No, glad about it he could never be, never in the world.

Oh, pshaw! It was raining. Johnny Blossom turned a scowling face toward the window. Just what one might expect — to have it rain the very first day of vacation! It always did, always. Funny kind of rain, anyhow — coming down in a regular slant. Perfectly horrid. He had planned to do so much today — be "boat-man," for instance.

If it would only rain enough so that the whole world would be covered with water, there might be some fun in it. If people had to go in boats, and nobody could walk anywhere, but every one had to swim, that would be jolly!

Well, he would not get up yet anyway, since it was raining so hard. He would lie there and sing all the school songs. So he began singing at the top of his voice, "*Yes, we love our grand old Norway.*" That went splendidly. Then he started another, but that tune ran up rather too high for his voice.

Mother appeared in the doorway.

"Come, John, don't lie there and screech in that fashion."

"Don't you like my singing, Mother?"

"Not that, it was horrible; and people can hear you away down the road."

It seemed rather pleasant to John, that his singing should be heard so far.

"Get up now," said Mother.

Happening to see his new paint-box with its enticing cakes of paint of all colors, Johnny Blossom in his night gown and bare feet was soon wholly absorbed in mixing paint.

There was Mother at the door again.

"Why, John! Are you standing there in your night gown painting?"

"Just see this beautiful color I have made, Mother," exclaimed John, exhibiting a muddy yellow mixture as the result of his efforts. Mother did not seem much impressed with the new yellow color.

"Wash yourself thoroughly," she said. Oh, yes! That was what Mother always said. John showed her two red ears he had scrubbed, but she wasn't satisfied. Oh, dear! How many bothersome crinkles and crannies there were in an ear, anyway!

After breakfast Johnny Blossom determined that he must walk twenty-four times back and forth on the veranda railing, the railing representing a rope stretched over Niagara Falls.

Johnny walked with greatest care, his arms outstretched and his tongue in his cheek, to help him keep his balance.

"Oh, John! My boy!" called Mother from the dining-room window.

"I'm — crossing — Niagara Falls — on — a — tight-rope," said Johnny.

He scarcely dared to speak, so very risky was the walking; but when he could take hold of one of the veranda posts, he called:

"Now I have got across Niagara Falls, and all the people are shouting 'Hurrah!'"

"Indeed," said Mother.

But my, oh, my! There was the sun. Johnny Blossom shouted "Asta" everywhere through the house, for now there was a chance for them to realize a certain plan that he had made. Since he could not carry it out alone, he would make use of Asta, even if she were only a girl, poor thing!

At last he found her, in a big rocking chair, reading some stupid girls' book. They rushed over to Jensen's Wharf, for that was where Jeremias the wood-cutter kept his boat, and they had a standing permission to use it whenever they wished.

The steamer would arrive very soon — the

one that did not come in to the wharf and whose passengers, therefore, had to be rowed ashore if they wished to land here. Johnny and Asta thought it would be great fun to row out and call up to the ship that if any one wished to go ashore, here were the boatmen for them, boatmen who were good for something, too.

There lay the steamer already. They rowed their best, but saw that a big boat carrying passengers ashore had already started. Pshaw! Too bad they had come so late! However, Johnny Blossom rowed swiftly and carefully alongside the steamer.

"Is there any one who wishes to land?" he shouted up toward the deck, in as manly a tone as he could assume.

Yes, there was an elderly gentleman with glasses who had not gone with the other boat.

"Can you row?" asked the gentleman with the glasses.

"You may be sure we can," answered Johnny Blossom, with a very superior air.

So the gentleman got into Jeremias's boat and Johnny and Asta turned it toward the wharf. Asta was always inclined to put her oars too deep in the water, and when she tried to take them out, she had to get up off her seat almost

every time. Johnny threw condemnatory glances at her. She was likely to ruin everything, doing no better than that, after he had assured the gentleman that they could row.

The boat scraped against the wharf.

"How much for my passage?" asked the gentleman.

"Do you think five cents is too dear?" asked Johnny in a businesslike manner.

No, the stranger thought not.

"I declare if there isn't the Kingthorpe heir himself, hiring out as boatman!" came a voice from the wharf.

Pshaw! Ola Ramm was hanging over the railing watching them.

"Kingthorpe heir?" asked the gentleman. "What does he mean by that?"

"It is what they call me," replied Johnny, rather soberly.

Asta led the way at once to the candy shop.

"Perhaps we ought not to have taken any money," said Johnny.

"I should like to know!" exclaimed Asta. "As heavy as he was to row!"

The raspberry drops were very good. Why not be boatmen all summer long?

A few moments later Johnny remarked, "The goat ought really to go to Grassy Island today."

"Really, it ought," agreed Asta.

"We'll bring it right down to the boat now," said John. And the goat that had lived all summer in the yard back of the barn was forthwith untied and taken out the back way down to Jensen's Wharf.

It was the cunningest goat you ever saw, lively but good, and so pretty — light gray, with a little beard. Mother had bought it early in the spring. On Sundays it had a blue ribbon around its neck, and other days a red worsted collar with a white button. It was a great pet.

John had lately decided that there was too little grass for it back of the barn and that the goat must go every day over to Grassy Island for a good meal.

There was no trouble in getting the goat down to the wharf, for it would follow John wherever he went. To get it into the boat was another matter, but that was accomplished at last, and they started out over the water. John rowed and Asta was to hold the goat; but suddenly it got contrary. It kicked out in spiteful fashion,

ONE DAY IN VACATION

put its head right against Asta's stomach, and was altogether unruly.

"Hold it still, why don't you?" shouted John. Asta struggled and strove, but without success.

"Oh, how stupid you are!" exclaimed her brother.

Evidently he would have to attend to the goat if it was to be made to behave. With this thought, Johnny Blossom laid his oars down and scrambled over the thwart. Now indeed was there a great to-do! The goat kicked and the boat rocked and tipped in a frightful manner. Johnny Blossom strove his best to get control, but the goat's legs went like drumsticks. The boat took in water at a great rate as it rocked violently from side to side.

"You'll go into the water, youngsters!" shouted some one from the shore. It was Pilot Stiansen.

Indeed, they wouldn't go into the water! Oh, the horrid little goat!

"You row," shouted Johnny to Asta, "and I'll hold it."

While Asta was changing her place in the boat, the goat kicked its liveliest, and the boat tipped so far over that it seemed as if it must capsize

the next instant. Before they knew it, Pilot Stiansen was right beside them in his big fishing boat.

"You wild youngsters! If ever I saw your equal!" he grumbled behind his red-brown beard. "Sit still, I tell you!"

Pilot Stiansen produced a piece of rope and, reaching over, tied the goat's legs together, then took the children's boat in tow and towards shore they went. The idea of their being towed! What a way to be treated! They would have got along beautifully if that meddlesome old pilot hadn't come and spoiled all their pleasure. Perhaps he would tattle about it, too.

"Go home now, like good children," said Pilot Stiansen, as he untied the goat's legs. "And don't do anything like this again."

"Pooh! He thought we would drown," said Asta. "Silly!"

Johnny Blossom also was indignant over the pilot's interference with their fine plan for feeding the goat. But it wasn't the stupidest thing in the world to tie the goat's legs together. In the afternoon they would do that, and Pilot Stiansen needn't trouble himself any more over their affairs.

Johnny Blossom hastened to get Mother's

sharpest scissors — the big shiny ones — for he intended to cut some long strips of stout cloth to tie the goat's legs with. Johnny cut and cut. Suddenly the big blades slipped, caught Johnny's little finger, and before he knew it, had cut the tip of it clean off! It hurt awfully — oh, well — not so terribly after all; but my, oh, my! how it bled! Johnny Blossom bound his not over-clean handkerchief around it, but still the blood came. Now it was all over his trousers. Perhaps he had better hide until it stopped.

"Mother! Mother!" shrieked Asta. "Here's a piece of a finger, with your big shears, lying on the attic stairs!"

"It is John's," said Mother instantly and with the utmost certainty.

The doctor was sent for, the finger-end sewed on, and the hand bandaged.

"There aren't many persons with a sewed-on finger tip, are there, mother?" asked John, with some pride.

"No, fortunately not," replied Mother.

In the evening who should come to visit Father but the elderly, spectacled gentleman they had rowed to shore in the morning!

"Why, here are my small boatmen!" said the gentleman.

"Boatmen?" repeated Father, astonished.

"Yes. They rowed me ashore from the steamer."

"Now, how pleasant that was, that they could be of service to you," said Father.

What would Father think if he knew that they had taken money for rowing a person ashore? Oh, dear! That had been wrong then. Johnny Blossom sat doubled together, scowling fiercely, as was his habit when he was worried about anything. That miserable five cents — why had they taken it?

At night Johnny lay wide awake, waiting for his mother's good-night visit.

"Aren't you sleepy, John?"

"No, I've got something I must tell you."

"What is it, little John?"

"We took five cents from that gentleman for rowing him ashore."

"Why, John, my boy! Did you?"

"Yes, but I asked him if he thought that was dear."

"But Father would not like your doing this, John."

"No, that's why I told you," said John.

"Have you said your prayers?"

"No, I was just thinking about that," replied John. "I was thinking that perhaps I had better say, 'Now I lay me' and 'Our Father' both tonight, on account of the finger tip and the five cents and everything else today, Mother." And John looked inquiringly up at his mother to see whether she approved.

"Yes," said Mother. So Johnny Blossom said his prayers with his eyes tightly squeezed together, and fell asleep immediately after.

"And there are several weeks more of vacation," sighed Mother.

CHAPTER X Tellef's Grandmother

REALLY, no pleasanter place was to be found than down at Sandy Point, where Tellef lived. The shabby gray hut stood among locust and wild cherry trees on a small green plot, and if you went up on the knoll back of the house you could get a wide view of the glorious open sea.

Tellef and Johnny Blossom had been friends ever since that time long ago when they had had a fight and he had broken Tellef's fishpole, and then had given him the two half-dollars he had got from Uncle Isaac. Never since had they been anything but the best of friends.

Another thing that was pleasant about going to Tellef's was that no one there talked to him about being heir of Kingthorpe and all that. He was sick of that subject now.

And yet there was something sad, too, at Tellef's house, for Tellef's grandmother was blind. Just think! When she went out of doors she had to keep her hand on the house and walk that way, going round and round it; and that looked so queer. Sometimes she would sit right down on the grass and cry because she could not see; and somehow it seemed especially sad that she should cry with those sightless eyes.

"Aren't you glad that you can see?" said Grandmother to the boys one day. "Don't you thank God every day for your good eyes?"

No, Johnny Blossom had never thought of such a thing. He shut his eyes tight so as to know how it would seem to be blind. Oh, dear, it must be dreadful! Think of everything being dark — always, always dark!

One day he and Tellef took the grandmother up on the knoll. She longed to feel the salt wind blowing directly from the water, she said. So there she stood, with her gray hair tossing about her wistful old face, and with her sightless eyes turned toward the sea.

"It was very kind of you boys to bring me up here," said Grandmother. "Oh, if I could only see the water! Is it smooth and bright?"

"Yes, it is like a mirror, Grandmother," answered Tellef.

"Are there many ships in sight?"

"Yes, there goes a steamer to the east, and a beautiful boat lies right near here, and far out there is sail after sail."

"Far out?" asked Grandmother.

"Yes, far out against the sky."

"Far out against the sky," repeated Grandmother, staring with her sightless eyes. Then she sat down to rest, with her hands folded under her apron and her face still turned seaward, while Tellef and Johnny Blossom played about in the heather.

"It must be dreadful to be blind," said Johnny to Tellef.

"Yes," said Tellef, tearing up bits of heather and tossing them away. "It is cataracts Grandmother has in her eyes."

"Is it?" said Johnny.

When they joined Grandmother again, she said: "It would be almost too much to ask of any one, but if the master of Kingthorpe were alive, I do believe I should have the courage to ask him for money enough to go and have my eyes operated upon, so that if possible I might see the ocean again."

Then they took Grandmother carefully down the hill, one boy on each side of her.

"Now that was kind of you," said Grandmother as she sat once more on the slope in front of the house.

Johnny Blossom dashed homeward over the hill, bounding his swiftest so as to get home soon, for he had thought of something he was eager to carry out. If the master of Kingthorpe were alive Grandmother would ask him for money, she had said. Well, but really — he, Johnny Blossom, was master of Kingthorpe now, so he must, of course, attend to it. And he knew how he could do it. He would sell the fishing rod Uncle Isaac had given him — it cost an awful lot of money, Miss Melling had said — and Grandmother should have all he got for it. And his collection of coins — he would sell that, too. It ought to bring a lot of money — those old two-shilling pieces were so curious; and there was the English coin — my! that was worth ever so much! — and the queer old medal.

Wasn't there something else he could sell so that Grandmother should see the ocean and everything again? Oh, of course — all those books about Indians; they must be worth a

good deal and he had at least twelve of them. And his collection of eggs! Why, yes! They were perfectly beautiful eggs, and rare, many of them. To be sure almost every one was broken a little on one side. That didn't matter a bit when they were placed nicely in a box, but perhaps people who bought eggs would rather have them whole. Well, the fishing rod was valuable, anyway.

Johnny Blossom was as red as a peony from his swift running when he dashed in upon his mother.

"Mother dear, can't you sell that fishing rod for me that I got from Uncle Isaac?"

"Sell your fishing rod? Indeed, you must not think of such a thing."

"Oh, yes, I must. I must. And my coin collection — awfully rare, some of the coins are, really; and my egg collection, too — there are three perfectly whole eggs in it, at the very least, and"—

"But why in the world should you sell all these things?"

"Oh, so that — so that — I tell you what, Mother, it is *dreadful* to be blind."

Mother stared in blank amazement.

"And Tellef's grandmother says that if the

master of Kingthorpe were alive, she would ask him for money to go and have her eyes operated on. It costs frightfully, you see, Mother, and I have to be the master of Kingthorpe now; so I want to give Tellef's grandmother the money. I *must* do it because Uncle Isaac would, and I am the Kingthorpe heir."

Johnny Blossom talked so fast that his words tumbled over each other. "Oh, I must," he continued, "for Grandmother said it would be heavenly to see the ocean once more."

Mother patted Johnny's hand. "We'll think about it, little John, and talk it over with Father."

But Johnny went to work at once to take the fishing rod apart, and then wrapped it very carefully in old newspapers. Great sport it would have been to have this fine rod to fish with — it was such a beauty — but think of not being able to see, just to walk around a house holding on to the walls! My, oh, my! how frightfully sad that was!

"I hear that you wish to sell your fishing rod so as to get money for Tellef's grandmother," said Father at the dinner table. "Very well, John. I will buy it and you shall run over to Sandy Point with the money this afternoon."

Johnny grew crimson with pleasure. "Oh, thank you, thank you!"

"You may bring me the fishing rod," said Father.

"It's all packed," answered Johnny.

Then Father gave Johnny a sealed envelope.

"Take great care of this — there is a good deal of money in it — and run down to Tellef's grandmother with it at once. Say that it comes from Kingthorpe."

So Johnny Blossom dashed over the hill again. This was something worth hurrying for. When he came to Sandy Point, he saw the grandmother walking alone around the outside of the house, feeling her way as usual.

"Good day," said Johnny Blossom, bowing low. "Please take this" — and he put the envelope into her hand.

"What is it?" asked Grandmother.

"It's money so that you can be made to see again," answered Johnny, earnestly.

"What are you talking about, boy?"

"I thought it was so awfully sad that you couldn't see — not the trees, nor the flowers, nor the ocean, nor anything — and so — and so — Father said that I must tell you that this

envelope came from Kingthorpe; but open it, open it!"

Johnny Blossom was so excited that he kept hopping around. Grandmother sat herself right down on the ground.

"It's more than I can bear," she said. "I'm all weak and trembly in my knees. God bless you, boy, what is it you say? Shall I see once more? Oh, God's mercy is great!"

Johnny kept on hopping. "Yes, you'll see everything, everything!"

"I hear they call you the heir of Kingthorpe," said Grandmother, "and I believe you are going to be just like the old master."

By this time Tellef's mother and Tellef and his sisters had joined them; the envelope was opened and several bills fell out.

"Did you ever in your life!" exclaimed Tellef's mother. "Here's two hundred dollars, Grandmother."

My, oh my! All that money for a fishing rod, thought Johnny, still dancing gleefully around Grandmother. But all at once Grandmother started up eagerly and began to talk fast:

"I must go right away. Come and help me. I have no time to lose. I have not seen the ocean

for twelve years. I must go right away. Oh, to think that the good God has remembered me, poor old body that I am!"

"You must thank Johnny Blossom, Grandmother," said Tellef's mother.

"I'm fairly out of my wits with joy," replied Grandmother.

That night when Mother came into Johnny's room to say good night, she found him wide awake. His eyes were big and earnest as he whispered, "Oh, Mother, it is wonderful to be heir of Kingthorpe." And Johnny Blossom that night, for the first time in his life, prayed a prayer that he made himself, instead of repeating the Lord's Prayer. He said:

"Thank you, God, for all the money for the fishing rod. Let Tellef's grandmother be made to see everything again. And thank you because I am heir of Kingthorpe. In Jesus' name. Amen."

Tellef's grandmother went away and stayed a long time. Johnny Blossom had almost forgotten the whole matter when Tellef said to him one day, "Grandmother is coming home tomorrow, and she can see!" So the next day Johnny Blossom and Tellef's mother and sisters

with Tellef went to the wharf to meet Grandmother, who was coming by boat.

Up the gangplank she walked, entirely alone, and looking around with a radiantly happy face.

"You must speak to Johnny Blossom too, Grandmother," said Tellef's mother. Johnny came forward, bowed low, and reached out to Grandmother a little sunburned hand.

"I thank you, sir," said Grandmother. "I thank you, sir."

Many persons were standing around, all looking at Grandmother and Johnny Blossom.

"It is this little gentleman who has given me my eyes again, friends. What a blessed miracle it is that I can *see!*"

Everybody looked at Johnny Blossom. Awfully embarrassing to have them stare so! But later Johnny sat on the top of the hill and sang, "*Yes we love our grand old Norway*," with the greatest enthusiasm, he was so overflowing with joy.

CHAPTER XI

The Pet Horse

HOW impossible Father was to understand! Why couldn't he decide about the little horse that Carlstrom had said "the young gentleman" might ride? Johnny Blossom had been out to the Kingthorpe stables a number of times to see the horse. My, oh, my! but it was a beauty! It was small and trim, dun-colored, with black mane; and oh, how swiftly and gracefully it could run on those slender legs! No, Father could have no idea how remarkable it was that Carlstrom had offered to let him ride — and such a horse as that!

However, one morning in the first week of vacation, Father said: "You may begin to ride now, John. I had a talk with Carlstrom yesterday."

"Thank you, Father."

"I do not need to say that you must be kind to the horse and do exactly as Carlstrom says."

"Of course. I'm going now." And Johnny

Blossom ran at topmost speed, so as not to lose a second's time in getting out to the little yellow horse.

Carlstrom was extraordinarily kind.

"We could have sent the horse in to the young gentleman," he said, with extreme politeness.

"Let the horse go away into town just for *me!*" said Johnny, amazed. "Oh, no. It is better that I should run out here. I ran like the wind."

Oh, what joy it was to ride! It was like having wings and flying through the air! Carlstrom showed him just how to hold the reins and to sit on the horse; and the little horse trotted and John rose in the saddle, and his face shone.

"Thank you very much." He bowed low to Carlstrom when at last he must go home.

After this, the moment he had swallowed his breakfast, off he would run to Kingthorpe; come home at noon, eat his dinner, and run straight out there again.

Father said it was best he should not ride in the town, but only out near Kingthorpe. Naturally, however, it was not long before the boys knew that Johnny Blossom, every single day, trotted around Kingthorpe on a beautiful horse; and of course the boys flocked out to King-

thorpe. They sat by the big pine tree and waited until Johnny Blossom came riding along. It was great fun for him when they thronged around him, exclaiming over everything, while he sat erect in the saddle, whip in hand.

Even the great big boys of the Fourth Class came. Otto Holm himself, who wore a stiff hat and carried a cane, sat and waited to see him, little Johnny Blossom! By and by it came about that they asked if they might not ride, just a little way — Otto Holm and Peter Prytz and Gunnar Olsen, and it was too embarrassing to say no to such great big fellows.

"If you want to play ball with us in the afternoons, you may," said Otto.

Indeed Johnny Blossom wanted to! He had hung over the fence day after day, looking at the big boys, who played in their shirt sleeves and without caps, and looked so manly. And these boys were asking him to play with them! Of course they must ride, they were so very friendly to him. It made him feel quite grand, too, to be the one to decide whether they should ride or not.

"It isn't worth while for you to say anything at home about our riding," said Otto. Oh, no! Johnny wouldn't say anything.

Day after day he found the group of big boys waiting for him. They did not embarrass him now by asking for rides, but took his permission so for granted that he himself had scarcely any chance to ride. However, it was interesting, because it was his horse, after all, and they kept appealing to him.

"Isn't it my turn now, Johnny Blossom?"

"He's mean, he is. It's mine!"

"Are you crazy? He rode only yesterday, John."

"Oh, John! Tell him to get off and let me ride!"

"Don't you do it! It's really my turn."

My, oh, my! How exciting it was!

Bob — that was the horse's name — knew Johnny whenever he went into the stable; there was no doubt about that, for the little horse would turn around in his stall and whinny at the sound of the boy's step or voice. Of course Johnny always had sugar for him and brushed his pretty coat for him every day — dear, cunning little Bob!

One day Otto Holm proposed that they should see who could ride most quickly over a certain distance. Otto, who of course had a watch, should manage the starting; and Peter Prytz

should be timekeeper at the turning point; and the time was to be kept strictly, even to the seconds, exactly as in real races. They all thought Otto's idea a fine one, but again they said to Johnny, "Now don't go and tattle about this at home, for then all the fun would be over."

Oh, no, Johnny would tell nothing. Great sport this race was going to be for him, because of course he would ride the swiftest of all, being the most accustomed to riding. The boys devoted several days to practising for the great race which was to come off on Saturday.

The weather that day was damp and close, and the roads were very muddy because it had rained hard through the night; but all the boys were assembled at the big pine tree when Johnny Blossom rode up. They cast lots to determine the order in which they should ride. Otto had a notebook and pencil and wrote the names. Johnny Blossom's, to his disgust, came last of all.

Otto rode first. He snapped the whip and galloped off, making the mud fly in every direction. There was much disputing among the waiting boys as to whether he started at three or four seconds after eleven.

Why! There he was back again. "Six minutes and eight seconds going," he shouted, "and eight minutes and one second coming back!"

The others went each in turn, all making fine speed. Johnny Blossom gave Bob two lumps of sugar after every trip.

Finally, it was Johnny's turn. "You are really too little to ride properly," said Otto. "We'll allow you double time."

Too little! Were they crazy? Indeed he wouldn't have double time. He would ride better than any of them, he would. Who was it owned the horse? He would show them who could ride best; and he struck Bob sharply. "Away with you, Bob! Faster! Faster!"

But Bob was so queer today. And he breathed so strangely. He had been breathing something like that these last few days, but today it was worse, and he didn't hurry even when Johnny struck him again with the whip. Finally he almost stopped, and breathed more queerly than ever.

Oh, dear! Johnny was in despair. The boys had all been much quicker than he, and they would just say that he was too little and must be allowed double time.

"Hurry up, Bob, I tell you!"

At last he reached the turning point. Peter Prytz, who kept the time there, laughed uproariously.

"That was awfully well done, Johnny Blossom! Only twelve minutes."

What a shame, what a shame that he should be the poorest rider of all! On the way back he whipped Bob so that the horse finally ran, puffing, coughing, and stumbling along.

All the boys laughed and shouted hurrah when Johnny got back to the starting point. How disgusting it was to have people make fun of you!

"Bob breathed so," said Johnny Blossom.

"Is it anything to worry about when a horse breathes?" scoffed Gunnar Olsen. "He breathed like a bellows when I rode, but yet I took only eight minutes and four seconds."

"Six seconds, you mean," said Otto.

"No, four, exactly."

"It was six."

"It was four."

There they stood with their angry faces close together as they quarreled over the two seconds. It seemed as if the dispute might end in blows.

"It's pretty bad, the way you've ridden today," said Lars Berget soberly, when Johnny Blossom came into the stable with Bob. "He is all used up, poor Bobby!"

"He breathes so queerly," said Johnny Blossom.

"If you only haven't broken his wind, boy. Pretty risky — to ride him the way you have these last days."

Oh, dear! How dreadful! At home no one knew a thing about anything, and here he had behaved like this and perhaps hurt Bob. To "break a horse's wind" was dangerous he knew, because he had heard about one of the livery stable horses that had to be shot on account of being "broken-winded." But Bob! It was impossible that it should go that way with Bob! Oh, it couldn't!

"Why, John dear, aren't you eating anything?" asked Mother that noon.

Oh, he had had enough — plenty.

"It seems to me you are very pale," pursued Mother. "Are you sure you are not sick?"

Pooh! Far from it. He wasn't the least bit pale.

Oh, they didn't know anything about the trouble with Bob, and he didn't dare to say a word about the racing or anything.

As soon as they left the table, back he ran to Kingthorpe. When he went into the stable Carlstrom was standing looking at Bob.

"It's a dark outlook here for the young gentleman," said Carlstrom. "The horse's wind is broken."

Johnny Blossom sat down upon a box, with his hands thrust deep in his pockets, and stared at Bob; but not a word passed his lips.

"The best thing to do is to shoot him at once," continued Carlstrom.

Away darted Johnny Blossom without a word. Out of the stable, across the grounds, and up to an outlying field he ran as if for dear life. In a far corner of the field he threw himself down, and burying his face in the grass cried bitterly, and so hard that his whole body shook with his sobbing.

Oh, Bob, Bob! And he, who was heir of Kingthorpe, had abused the little horse! What would Uncle Isaac say if he knew? And now he could never ride horseback any more! Oh — oh — oh! He must go home and tell Mother. It was dreadful to do it, but he must, he must.

When he passed Kingthorpe, he took care not to glance in that direction; it would be too sad to see the stable and all that. He had a lump

in his throat the whole way and was in utter misery, but he kept on running doggedly. When some boys called to him he only ran the faster, without looking back.

Mother sat alone on the veranda. How good that she was alone! John sat down on the steps, all doubled together, and said not a word.

"Well, John," said Mother, "is anything the matter?"

"Yes, there is something — something perfectly dreadful, Mother, but I've *got* to tell you about it."

"Yes, that is best, little John."

"But it is a terrible thing. Carlstrom says that I've ruined Bob riding him so hard and that Bob must be" —

Johnny could say no more, but threw himself flat on the floor and cried. By degrees Mother got him to tell about the big boys, who wanted to ride, about the racing and everything.

"It was really shameful of those great big boys," said Mother.

"Yes, but Father said I was to be kind to Bob, and careful of him — and I haven't been," sobbed Johnny. "And besides, I am the heir of Kingthorpe, you know, Mother."

Johnny's face was swollen with crying, and

the tears had made streaks down his dirty cheeks.

"Of course you should have spoken to Father and Mother about it."

"Yes."

Mother put him down on the sofa and washed his hot, tear-stained face. Some time after he exclaimed, "Mother."

"Yes, little John?"

"Do you think Uncle Isaac up in heaven is sorry he made me heir of Kingthorpe, because of this with Bob?"

"No, I do not believe he is."

"Are you sure of it?" Johnny's blue eyes gazed earnestly at his mother.

"Yes. Perfectly sure."

There was something else he wished to ask, but he scarcely liked to — perhaps it was silly. Well, he *could* ask Mother about it, though he wouldn't ask any one else in the whole world.

"Mother dear, don't you think that Bob will surely go to heaven when he dies?"

CHAPTER XII
The Umbrella Adventure

JOHNNY BLOSSOM was entirely at a loss. Here it was the best part of the vacation and not a bit of fun going on. It rained nearly every day—such disgustingly long showers that if they did ever hold up, it was too sopping wet in the grass and everywhere to do anything. Besides the wind blew very hard, but that was rather pleasant, there was so much you could do when there was a good wind — fly kites, for instance.

But though kites were great fun, there was something else Tellef and he had thought of.

They had not done it yet, but they had often talked about it; and their plan was that some day, when there was a good brisk wind, they should take that enormous, old-fashioned umbrella Tellef's grandmother had, and use it for a sail! It would work beautifully.

They were not allowed to sail with real sails, but with an umbrella — pooh! nobody could object to that, surely. He would hold the umbrella and Tellef would steer.

It was easy enough to get possession of the umbrella, and out at Sandy Point there was always a boat to be had just by turning over your hand, so to speak. Today there was exactly the right kind of a breeze. Possibly it was a little strong, but that would be only the more fun. So Johnny Blossom took to his heels and sped over the hill to Tellef.

The umbrella and the boat were soon procured and the boys started out. First they rowed in very proper fashion past the Tongue — a rather high point of land; but when they were well hidden by this point, they pulled in the oars and put up the umbrella in a flash.

Pshaw! What a beastly wind! He could scarcely hold the umbrella, and as for Tellef's steering, it was downright stupid. Oh, oh!

Was the boat going to upset? It was a lively time. The boat flew like an arrow, the waves were high, the wind — really he could not hold the umbrella much longer. My, oh, my! how far out they were now. The boat took in water every minute — whole buckets full. Johnny Blossom's blouse was sopping wet.

Oh!

Away went the umbrella, right out of his hands, and only by a hair's breadth did the boat escape capsizing. Tellef, as quick as lightning, had thrown his weight to the upper side of the careening boat or they would have gone straight into the water.

Over the sea sailed the umbrella — and there were Johnny and Tellef in the rocking boat far out from land.

"Ugh! boy!" said Tellef.

"Ugh! boy!" said Johnny.

"That wasn't much to do," said Tellef. What it was that wasn't much to do, Tellef didn't say. Johnny only stared out over the gray-blue splashing waves.

Only think! He might have been lying under those waves now!

And all at once the truth smote him: he ought not to have done this; he had known all

the time that he ought not, and yet — he had done it.

It was only an excuse when he had told himself that it was all right to sail with an umbrella. He knew perfectly well that it wasn't. Ugh! how disobedient he had been, he who was heir of Kingthorpe, too! Before, it didn't matter so very much if he were disobedient; but everything was different now that he was the Kingthorpe heir. He must not be disobedient any more, for it was shameful. How sorry, how sorry he was!

All this time they were striving as hard as they could to turn the boat toward shore. Johnny's thoughts ran on:

It wasn't because the wind blew so furiously or that the waves dashed so high or that the umbrella had floated away, that made him so sorry! No indeed. Pooh! Nor was it that they sat drenched in the tossing boat far out among great white-capped waves. If he only had not been so awfully disobedient.

Suppose he had been drowned. It would have been pleasant, wouldn't it, for him, the heir of Kingthorpe, to meet Uncle Isaac at the heavenly gate, after being so disobedient?

"This was a crazy plan," said Tellef. His cap

had blown away, his hair was dripping round his ears, and he rowed with might and main.

"If we can only get behind the Tongue," said Tellef.

"If we can only get behind the Tongue," repeated Johnny. They rowed steadily for a while, their red faces showing the effort they made, while the wind blew more fiercely than ever.

"We can't round the point," said Tellef.

"Yes, we can," said Johnny Blossom, bracing his feet more firmly against the bottom of the boat.

"Shall we shout for help?" asked Tellef.

"Oh, that would only frighten them if they heard us," answered Johnny Blossom.

The great waves were now driving the boat in towards the shore, but unfortunately to the outer, dangerous side of the Tongue.

"Shall we say our prayers?" asked Tellef.

"Not yet," answered John.

— "for we are surely going to drown," continued Tellef.

The wind was roaring so that they could scarcely hear each other speak.

The boat was driven nearer and nearer to the shore. "It is going to strike and we must jump for the land," screamed Johnny. The instant

after, the boat did strike, and Tellef and John were thrown head first onto the smooth beach.

Tellef had been thrown farthest up; he pulled John to where he was, and there they lay, panting, while the boat swung and tossed in the sea, a little way out.

"Now we are saved," said Tellef.

But my, oh, my! how wet they were! They sprang to their feet and ran — up over the Tongue, over mound and marsh; they climbed over fences and waded through thick-growing heather. Now and again they glanced seaward, seeking the boat and the umbrella, but not a scrap of either was to be seen — a fine result from their grand adventure, truly!

"You'd better come into our house to get yourself dry," said Tellef.

"But the umbrella," said Johnny.

"Yes — it was as unlucky as it could be," said Tellef. "Perhaps it is as well not to say anything about the umbrella just at first."

But no sooner had they come into the little kitchen where Tellef's mother was roasting coffee over an open fire than John said:

"The worst thing is about the umbrella."

"About what umbrella?" asked Tellef's mother.

"Grandmother's. It blew away."

Tellef's mother was very much out of patience, but she wrung the water from Johnny's blouse and hung the blouse by the fire.

"And you," she said sharply, "the Kingthorpe heir — to behave like this!"

Oh, yes — it was just that that made everything worse. Johnny Blossom sat in his shirt sleeves close by the hearth, staring thoughtfully into the fire.

It was being heir of Kingthorpe, he could plainly see, that made things difficult; for, truly, hadn't everything been easier when he was just Johnny Blossom? There was so much to think of now — responsibility and all that. But still, he really wanted to be good; he really and truly did; though he hadn't seemed to succeed very well.

Johnny Blossom sat crouched together on the veranda steps, Mother sat on the veranda sewing, and the sun shone hotly down. Long silence.

"Well, John," said Mother. "What is the matter?"

How could Mother know that anything was the matter? for he had just sat there stock still and had not said a single word!

"Oh, there are some things that are so hard, Mother."

"Yes, I know that."

"Mother dear, *must* I be the Kingthorpe heir?"

"Yes, you must, John."

"Well. I've been out sailing with an umbrella" —

"But John, John! You knew perfectly well that you ought not to do that!"

"Yes, but I just forgot it for a minute or two, Mother."

"That's only an excuse, John. You remembered it all the time. Look me right in the eye and say whether you didn't remember it."

Johnny blinked at a great rate, and then looked straight at his mother. Yes, he had remembered it, that is to say, deep in, he had.

"Exactly — 'deep in' — that was Conscience, little John."

"There is so much to remember, Mother!"

"No. What Father and Mother tell you about right and wrong is not too much for you to remember."

Deep silence.

"The umbrella blew away, Mother, and the boat is lost, too."

"Tell me all about it."

"The waves were too high, you see — that's the way it all came; and the umbrella was too frightfully heavy; but we landed head first, if you'll believe it. This is the way we fell over each other." And Johnny Blossom demonstrated on the veranda floor how they had been cast ashore.

"You got wet then?"

"Oh, yes. You may know we were wet, sopping wet. We were almost upset in the sea, you understand; we were nearly drowned."

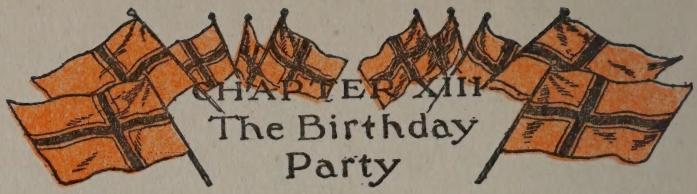
"Oh, John! My dear little John!" Mother was so frightened that she drew him into her arms.

"Yes, but you see we didn't drown; and my blouse got dry as tinder at the fireplace in Tellef's house. Just feel how dry it is!"

"But isn't your shirt wet?"

"Yes, that's wet," admitted Johnny Blossom.

The next day Mother said: "Father and I have decided, John, that you shall go away for a while this vacation. You shall go to visit Mrs. Beck at Ballerud. That will be pleasant for you, and as it is an inland country place, I shan't have to be in constant anxiety about your falling into the sea."



CHAPTER XIII
The Birthday Party

THE first of September was Johnny Blossom's birthday, and Father and Mother had decided that he should have a party and that the party should be held at Kingthorpe. How delightful that would be!

He was to be allowed to invite just exactly whom he pleased, especially those who had been kind to him, Mother said. My, oh, my! but that would mean a good many!

Soon after this plan was made, all the household went out to Kingthorpe one day — Father, Mother, Asta, Andrea, Dagny, and Johnny Blossom, of course, and the two maids.

Wide open stood the park gates, wide open the heavy, richly wrought gates to the courtyard, where the fountain was splashing musically; wide open, too, the great entrance doors and all the doors between the rooms, so that light and air streamed once more through the long-closed mansion. Very big and beautiful it looked in

the bright sunshine, and its curtains fluttering in the summer wind seemed to be waving a welcome from the windows.

In the lofty, echoing rooms everything had been left undisturbed: the furniture with its silken upholstery, the mirrors reaching from floor to ceiling, the great paintings that filled the walls, and the art treasures, gathered from every corner of the world. Many of these tapestries and vases and statues were extremely rare, but to Johnny Blossom they were only queer, especially a certain Indian idol with an ugly face made of gold. Why should any one want that?

Mother went about, uncovering mirrors and furniture until the room which was called the white salon showed all white and yellow, with its gilding and its silken damask cushions gleaming in the strong September sunlight.

"I think Uncle Isaac would like that there should be a festival at Kingthorpe on the first birthday you have after becoming the Kingthorpe heir, John," said Mother.

Johnny Blossom went storming through the rooms. My, oh, my! how little he seemed when he looked at himself in those enormous mirrors. Soon, however, he was walking on the railing

of the veranda. What a veranda it was, with its massive stone pillars and broad steps of white marble leading to the grounds! Still, Johnny Blossom was not altogether sure that the veranda at home wasn't just as pretty; at any rate, it was pleasanter, that was certain.

Below the veranda at Kingthorpe an avenue of nut trees stretched a long way. The foliage was so thick that the avenue was always in deep shade, however bright the day. Not a sunbeam pierced the gloom, but far down at the end of the avenue, something shone like a big glittering eye. That was the sea shining.

The whole garden with its crooked old trees and newly planted young ones was overflowing with fruit: big and little pears, red apples, yellow apples, and oh! any quantity of plums—yellow plums bursting with ripeness, great juicy blue plums, and those sweet ones of a reddish purple color. Hurrah!

And he was to ask every one he wished to! Hurrah for that, too! All the boys in his class, of course; and all the boys in the next higher; why, yes, and those little fellows in the class below. And Tellef! And Tellef's sisters and mother and the grandmother — she could see now — yes, he must have her. Then all those

old women at the almshouse. And the workmen at the wharf and the Works — they must come with their families.

Mother planned everything for the party. There should be long tables in the park, where the feast should be spread for the children and most of the grown-up people; but the old and feeble ones whom Johnny invited should have their feast in the beautiful dining room that had angels painted on the ceiling. A band of music was to come from the city. There were to be flags and colored lanterns the entire length of the shady avenue, and when daylight faded and the park began to grow dusky, there would be fireworks — yes, fireworks as true as you live! Mother said so.

As the first of September drew near, Johnny Blossom could scarcely sit still a minute, he was so full of joy. He asked if he might not go around and invite the guests himself, it would be so jolly.

"You mustn't forget anybody," warned Mother.

Far from it. He was sure he would remember every single one.

First he went to Madame Bakke, who lived

nearest. She had had a long illness and was paler than usual today. Johnny Blossom put his heels together and bowed.

"I want to know if you will come to a party on Saturday at Kingthorpe, Madame Bakke," said Johnny.

"What do you say?" asked Madame Bakke.

"It's my party," continued John, "and I am to invite as many as I please."

"Well, well!" exclaimed Madame Bakke in delight. "Am I to go to Kingthorpe?"

"Yes, and there is so much sunshine out there," said Johnny. "You'll see how hot the sun is on the white marble steps."

"But I haven't any fine clothes," said Madame Bakke.

"Well, of course you must look nice," said Johnny seriously, "but you don't need anything fine. Good-by, and welcome to the party."

Johnny Blossom bowed himself out and Madame Bakke watched him as long as he was in sight.

Next he went to the little crippled boy who had such big, mournful eyes.

"I'm going to have a party at Kingthorpe," said Johnny, "and I want you to come. There will be lots and lots of yellow plums."

"Is that so?" asked the little cripple.

"You may chop my head off if it isn't," said Johnny. "And your little sisters are to come, too; only they must have their faces washed."

"Can I eat all the plums I want?" asked the little cripple.

"Oh, yes, the whole garden is full."

"Shall I come now?" asked the child, smiling.

"No, it is next Saturday."

"That's a long time to wait."

"Oh, well, the plums will be all the riper."

Away went Johnny Blossom to Jeremias the wood-cutter.

"On Saturday you must come to my party at Kingthorpe, Jeremias," said Johnny.

"Who is going to invite me?" inquired Jeremias.

"Why, *I* invite you, you see."

"What should I do there?"

"Oh, eat and drink and have fun. If you want to swing in the big swing, for instance, you can do that."

"Well, now! Perhaps that would be pleasant," said Jeremias the wood-cutter. "It is handsome of you to invite me."

"I'm inviting all my friends," said Johnny Blossom, earnestly. "You must wear that

light coat the mayor gave you, for that will look nice, you know."

Yes, he had that coat, but who had told Johnny to tell him to wear it?

"I thought of it myself."

Jeremias wagged his head. "I tell you, there's something to a boy that has the head to plan like that."

"You will be very welcome, Jeremias," said Johnny ceremoniously.

Now it was Katrina the dwarf he was inviting. She could not believe at first that she was asked to a party at Kingthorpe.

"A dwarf like me would not be wanted at that fine place," said poor Katrina.

"Yes, indeed, you are to come; you must come. There's going to be a band of music the whole time."

"Music? Is there to be music?"

"Yes, and awfully good things to eat."

"Oh! but to think — music! It's just heavenly to listen to music."

"Well, you can sit and listen to music all day, and eat plums at the same time."

Johnny prevailed; poor little Katrina agreed that she would come.

At the almshouse all the old women gathered

in the hall and stared at Johnny Blossom. He looked very little standing among them. Indeed they would come, all of them, he might be sure of that.

"But why do you invite poor old folks like us?" asked Olava.

"Oh, because I am heir of Kingthorpe, you know, and because everybody likes to go to a party."

All the old women laughed, and Johnny said, "Welcome to Kingthorpe, then, on Saturday," and bowed and went his way.

Later he invited many, many children from the town as well as from his own school, and all the teachers.

Oh, it was wonderful! wonderful! Johnny Blossom had to stand on his head in the grass, time after time — everything was so unspeakably joyful!

At last the great day came and the weather could not have been finer. The gates to Kingthorpe stood wide open and people thronged inside. The flags waved, the sunbeams danced, and under the old trees there was a continual buzz of gay talk and laughter.

At first, however, it was a little ceremonious. Johnny Blossom had to stand beside Father and

Mother on the great marble steps and welcome the guests. He was rather sober and felt a little shy. Father and Mother, too, although they smiled, were somewhat serious. Mother's eyes even had tears in them.

All the old women came clambering up the steps and shook hands with Johnny; and then Mother took them into the drawing room and said, "Please feel free to go anywhere you wish about the house and to look at everything."

Gradually the great rooms were filled, the park overflowed with children, and the band in the walnut tree avenue sent everywhere its strong, rich tones. On a bench near the bandstand sat Katrina the dwarf in a bright red dress. When Johnny Blossom saw her he ran to the garden and picked as many plums as he could carry and put them in her lap. "I promised you these, you know," he said.

It wasn't long before there were children in the trees everywhere, shaking the branches, throwing the fruit down to the grassy ground, where their fathers and mothers sat laughing and wondering at everything. To the children it was all like a fairy tale. There were dances and games and every kind of jollity under the stately old trees,

and it took some skill to get the people to their places when the feast was ready.

Long tables stood in rows in one part of the park, as had been planned. Father presided here, while Mother attended to John's special guests in the beautiful dining room. Milla the fishwoman and Olava and the others sat stiff and proper on the edge of the damask-covered chairs, saying not a word. Tellef's grandmother, however, talked fast enough. She was so happy, now that she could see.

"Ah, me! Ah, me!" said she. "It's all a miracle; that I should be here in this fine room and see all this grandeur, see out of the window where the sun shines, and see also something that shines still brighter in Johnny Blossom's eyes."

The old people strayed through the house upstairs and down. They looked at everything, felt of everything, exclaimed over everything; they ate, and put into their pockets, and ate again.

Johnny Blossom ran joyfully around everywhere. He was not still two minutes. They all wanted to see him and called to him from every direction. My, oh, my! how jolly it was to be the heir of Kingthorpe!

When the feasting was over, there was a call for silence. It came from Father, who stood

again at the top of the marble steps and was evidently going to make a speech. All the children flocked together near the steps, in the sunshine, and hundreds of childish faces were upturned towards the speaker. Behind Father, on the veranda, at the windows, and in the doorways stood John's aged friends, among them Katrina in her bright red dress and Jeremias the wood-cutter in the mayor's light coat that was altogether too small for him. Jeremias had been to the Kingthorpe woodshed the first thing, for there was something he understood; but now he had stationed himself behind Father. The crippled child sat on the lowest step, his pockets stuffed full of plums.

John had to stand right beside his father during the speech. Every word could be heard even by those on the edge of the crowd:

"Johnny Blossom had permission to invite all his friends to Kingthorpe today. He was to ask all who had been kind to him, and it looks as if he had a great many kind friends. This is his first birthday since he became heir of Kingthorpe. Perhaps you think it is an easy thing to be that — that it means only to shake ripe fruit into your lap and to live in big, bright rooms. Johnny Blossom will understand more

and more, as time goes on and he grows older, that it is not easy to be the Kingthorpe heir.

"Do you ask why? Because it means work and responsibility. For what is all this that you see, house and garden, park and farm, but a *loan* to be accounted for? It is only a loan. That is why it brings to Johnny Blossom work and responsibility. He must remember that Uncle Isaac did not give him all this to use simply for his own benefit and pleasure — far from it — but for the good of others. He must remember that riches bring duties. He must remember that God will some time say to him, 'Johnny Blossom, how have you dealt with what you received as a loan upon the earth?'"

It was very solemn and impressive to have Father say all this about him, and a lump came in Johnny's throat. Father paused and then continued, speaking more emphatically:

"Children, you are all heirs. You are all heirs to God's Kingdom. You all have work to do, responsibility to bear. You, too, will be asked some time: 'What have you done upon earth? Have you been loving and kind? Have you tried to do what good you could?' The greatest thing is to be loving; but you know that life demands from us not only love, but

truth and obedience and much besides of which I will not speak now. I wish only that from this first visit to Kingthorpe you should take home with you this word: *You are all God's children, all heirs together of God's Kingdom.*"

Father was certainly a splendid speaker. There! they were shouting hurrah! Johnny joined in at first, but soon he found they were saying, "Hurrah for Johnny Blossom!" This was embarrassing, but pleasant, after all.

Again the company scattered throughout the park. This was the time for the sack-racing and other contests in jumping, running, and singing. Father gave out the prizes, and then refreshments were served again.

The sunbeams slanted more and more and some of the children fell asleep, leaning against their mothers; so the fireworks began earlier than had been planned. With the first rocket's hissing flight the children awoke and shouted for joy, and the fireworks hissed and sparkled and flashed — red, blue, green, yellow — above the park.

Finally, the whole company assembled in the great white salon. The children sang some beautiful songs, ending with, "*Yes, we love our grand old Norway!*" Some one came forward,

elbowing his way. It was Jeremias in his tight coat.

"I want to say thank you, sir, for such a day as this. I'm only a poor man, but I can say this much, Johnny Blossom can do many a good turn"—

Jeremias seemed to have no more to say.

Then some one lifted Johnny Blossom up. He was warm and red, but beaming. "Come soon again, everybody!" he called out.

Little by little the room emptied. The colored lights shone like small suns along the dark avenues, and the stars twinkled and gleamed.

In the tiny bedroom in town Johnny Blossom laid his brown head on the pillow. "Thank you, dear God, thank you, thank you," he murmured, and said no more, for he was overpowered by sleep.

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